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Negro slavery

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NEGRO SLAVERY;

OR,

A VIEW

OF

SOME OF THE MORE PROMINENT FEATURES

OF

THAT STATE OF SOCIETY,

AS IT EXISTS IN

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AND IN THE

COLONIES OF THE WEST INDIES,

ESPECIALLY IN

JAMAICA.

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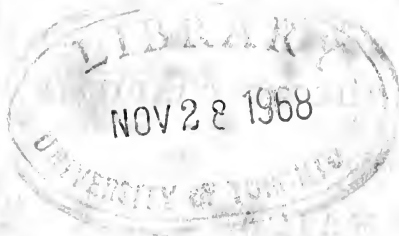
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NEGRO SLAVERY,

&c. &c.

THE object of the present publication is to furnish to the public a plain, authentic, and unvarnished picture of Negro slavery, not as it may have existed at some antecedent period of time, but as it exists at the present moment, both in the United States of America, and in the European Colonies of the West Indies, which have been peopled by imported Africans. We shall begin with the United States.

THE NEGRO SLAVERY *of the* UNITED STATES.

The real nature of Negro slavery, as it exists in the United States, at the present moment, cannot be better exhibited than by republishing an article which made its appearance not long since in a monthly periodical work. It is a review of two volumes of travels which had recently been published in this country; the one entitled "Travels in Canada and the United States," by Lieutenant Francis Hall; and the other, "Sketches of America," by Mr. Fearon. The article is as follows.—

In undertaking the review of the works of Lieutenant Hall and Mr. Fearon, we have no intention to amuse our readers with a description of American scenery, or to communicate information on the politics

or statistics of the United States. Neither is it our object to discuss the much-agitated question of the advantages of emigrating to that land of large promise, and, as some allege, of lean performance. We mean to devote the present article to the consideration of a single feature in the picture of American society given by our authors, and on which, as it stands revealed to us in these volumes in all its deformity, we are anxious to fix the regards of our readers. We allude to the NEGRO SLAVERY which pervades a great part of the United States.

The most copious view both of the legal and actual condition of the slave, as it exists in the United States, is to be found in the work of Mr. Hall. It is true, as this intelligent writer observes, that information on their actual state, whether in law or fact, is little attainable by a cursory traveller. The planter, of course, will not present himself for examination, with his memorandum book of the stripes and tortures he has inflicted, and of the groans which have followed. If he affords any information at all on the subject, it passes through a doubly distorted medium. As a planter, he is interested in concealing the evils, and still more the enormities, of Negro servitude; while, as an American, he is naturally anxious to vindicate the national character in the eyes of a foreigner. Add to this, that the testimony of the slave himself would gain no credit from the enemies to his freedom; whilst it is almost impossible that the passing traveller, or the occasional guest, should himself witness much of the practical operation of a system, the most odious and frightful part of which is necessarily withdrawn from the public eye. In general, therefore, the traveller has it only in his power to delineate such broad outlines as are incapable of concealment, leaving them to be filled up by means of those fair inductions which, on the admitted principles of human nature, we are authorised to draw from the

undisputed facts of the case. And this is all which Mr. Hall, or indeed Mr. Fearon, professes to do.

The law by which slaves, and even free Men of Colour, are governed in the Carolinas—and Mr. Hall believes that the same or a similar code prevails in all the *slave* states—is a provincial act passed in 1740, and made perpetual in 1783. It begins with an enactment justly and feelingly stigmatized by our author as a “heart-chilling declaration.” It is as follows: “Whereas, in his Majesty’s plantations, &c. slavery has been allowed, be it enacted, that all Negroes, Mulattoes, &c. who are or shall hereafter be in this province, and all their issue and offspring, born and to be born, shall be, and are hereby declared to be, and shall remain for ever hereafter, absolute slaves.”

A clause follows, from which Mr. Hall tells us, and we can well credit his report, that “the most iniquitous oppressions are at this day deduced.” “IT SHALL ALWAYS BE PRESUMED THAT EVERY NEGRO IS A SLAVE, UNLESS THE CONTRARY CAN BE MADE TO APPEAR*.” Hall, p. 422.

The ninth clause gives to two justices of the peace and five freeholders, who most probably are always slave owners, the power of trying slaves even for capital offences, and of carrying their sentence into effect without any reference, which we can discover, to a higher tribunal; and this court (subject, as it would seem, to no revisal, and with whose decisions not even the mercy of the governor can in most cases interfere, no report of its proceedings being made to him), may

* This appalling principle, we lament to say, is also still the universal rule of law throughout the whole of our West-Indian possessions. The clumsy attempt which has recently been made in Jamaica, to modify, by means of a process *de homine replegiando*, its cruel consequences, only serves to establish the opprobrious fact more incontestibly.

inflict such manner of death * “as they shall judge will be most effectual to deter others from offending in like manner.” Before this tribunal, so formed, the evidence of all free Negroes and of any slave, is taken against a slave, “without oath †.”

The thirty-fourth clause forbids any master from suffering a slave to traffic on his own account ‡.

The thirty-seventh clause, observes Mr. Hall, presents an exquisite specimen of legislative cant and cruelty. It declares “cruelty” to be “not only highly unbecoming those who profess themselves Christians, but odious in the eyes of all men who have any sense of virtue and humanity.” It, *therefore* enacts, that “to restrain and prevent barbarity from being exercised towards slaves,” “any person wilfully murdering a slave shall forfeit 700*l.* currency,” that is 100*l.* sterling; “and that, if any person shall on a sudden heat and passion, or by undue correction, kill his own slave, or the slave of another person, he shall forfeit 350*l.* currency,” or 50*l.* sterling.

The thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth clauses are conceived in a similar spirit. Fourteen pounds (we are not told whether this be currency or sterling, but it matters little), is the penalty for “cutting out the tongue, dismembering, and other tortures inflicted by any other instrument than a horsewhip, cowskin, or small stick.” There is, it is true, a semblance of hu-

* Fortunately for humanity, the feelings manifested by the British public during the last thirty years have led to the abolition, in our own colonies, of the cruel modes of inflicting death which were previously in common use there. Capital punishments are now confined to hanging.

† Such, in general, and with slight and unessential modifications, is also the constitution of the slave courts in our own colonies.

‡ In our West Indies, this restriction is for the most part confined to such articles as form the subjects of the traffic of masters, as sugar, coffee, cotton, cocoa, &c. &c.

manity in the provision which follows, and which enacts, that the master of a slave shall be presumed guilty when his slave is maimed or cruelly beaten; but the whole effect of the clause is destroyed by ordering, that if he should not be able to clear himself of the imputation "by evidence," he may clear himself of it, "BY MAKING OATH TO THE CONTRARY." This is holding out a premium for perjury.

By the forty-third clause, any White man meeting above seven slaves on a high road together, SHALL AND MAY WHIP EACH OF THEM, NOT EXCEEDING TWENTY LASHES ON THE BARE BACK. And by the forty-fifth clause a penalty of 100*l.* currency is inflicted for the crime of teaching a slave to write.

It would be difficult to account for the wanton and superfluous barbarity which is exhibited in these and similar enactments, if we were not to resort, for an explanation of the phenomenon, to the powerful operation, in the breast of masters, of that basest and most cruel of all passions—fear. In this view of the subject, Mr. Hall seems to concur; for he thus closes his account of the slave laws of Carolina:—

"Such is the code by which Christians govern Christians: nor is it, in any point, a dead letter. The fears of the proprietors are tremblingly alive, and racked with the dread of an insurrection, in which they must expect the measure they have meted. A military police is constantly kept up in Charleston; and every Man of Colour, whether slave or free, found in the streets after dark, without a pass, is taken up and punished*." Hall, p. 424.

But we have scarcely occasion to resort to this prin-

* Mr. Birkbeck, in his Notes on America, speaks in strong terms of the perpetual state of apprehension in which the planters of Virginia appeared to live, lest their slaves should rise against them.

ciple, in order to account for the practical atrocities of the slave system. The very existence of absolute slavery on the one hand, and of unrestricted power on the other, implies them.

“He,” observes Mr. Hall afterwards, “must be a very sanguine enthusiast in favour of human nature, who believes that the Negro, thus protected by the laws, will be very tenderly cherished by his master*.” The uncontrolled will of the most virtuous individual would be a fearful thing to live under; but the brutal passions of the sordid, the cruel, and the ignorant, scourges which might well ‘appal the guilty and confound the free,’ are the rule by which at least nine-tenths of the slave population are governed. If, so governed, they are mildly and justly governed, we must admit the constant operation in their favour of a miracle strong enough to invert the whole moral order of nature. To render tigers granivorous would be comparatively easy.

“It is not impossible, but that the house servants and personal domestics of humane and enlightened masters may be in a condition not in every respect much worse than that of persons filling the same station in European countries; but it is not from the good fortune of this minute portion we can deduce a fair estimate of the condition of the many. It is on the plantations and principally, perhaps, among the petty proprietors, the work of torture goes on. An occasional instance of atrocity sometimes meets the public eye, and sheds a lurid light upon a region ‘where hope never comes.’” Hall, pp. 426, 427.

Mr. Hall then states some particulars in the mode of

* “The Abolitionists are charged with an affectation of philanthropy, because they think Black men have the same feelings with White; but it is the very sobriety of reason, to ascribe to planters the virtues of angels.”

treating slaves, which he asserts to be matters of public notoriety, admitting of no dispute, and therefore affording an undeniable foundation on which to discuss the question of their physical enjoyments. Their huts are miserable in the last degree, built of unsquared trunks of pine trees, so ill put together that, during the night, the fire shines through them as through wire lanterns. And he states it as no slight addition to their toil to be obliged to cut and fetch wood to warm this miserable dwelling, pervious as it is to every blast, and to have their night's rest perpetually broken by the necessity of keeping up fires to temper the cold*. The furniture of these huts consists of a few gourds and wooden utensils, and, as for bedding, a Negro is supposed to require none. The accommodation to which even the master who is reputed humane and equitable considers his slaves to be entitled is this wretched cabin with a single blanket. The usual clothing of the plantation slaves, Mr. Hall observed "almost invariably to be ragged and miserable in the extreme." Their food consists of rice and Indian meal, with a little dried fish, and is, "in fact, the result of a calculation of the cheapest nutriment on which human life can be supported." (p. 429.)

"I have heard indeed," continues this enlightened traveller, "of the many luxuries the Negro might enjoy were he not too indolent; of the poultry and vegetables he might raise round his hut; but his unconquerable idleness masters all other feelings. I have seldom heard an argument against the Negroes that was not double-edged. If they are, indeed, so indolent by nature that even a regard for their own comforts proves insufficient to rouse them to exertion, with what colour can it be asserted that they feel it no misfortune

* Slaves in the West Indies will, of course, suffer less from cold than those in America.

to be compelled to daily labour for another? Is the sound of the whip so very exhilarating that it dispels at once indolence and suffering? But I admit the fact of their indolence. The human mind fits itself to its situation, and to the demands which are made upon its energies. Cut off hope for the future and freedom for the present; superadd a due pressure of bodily suffering and personal degradation; and you have a slave, who, of whatever zone, nation, or complexion, will be, what the poor African is, torpid, debased, and lowered beneath the standard of humanity.

“ To inquire if, so circumstanced, he is happy, would be a question idly ridiculous, except that the affirmative is not only gravely maintained, but constitutes an essential moral prop of the whole slave system. Neither they who affirm, nor they who deny, pretend to any talisman by which the feelings of the heart may be set in open day; but if general reasoning be resorted to, since pain and pleasure are found to be the necessary result of the operation of certain accidents on the human constitution, the aggregate of our sensations (that is, our happiness or misery) must be allowed to depend on the number and combination of these accidents. ‘ If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?’

“ Should there be any unknown principle in the Negro’s constitution which enables him to convert natural effects into their contraries, and so despise contingencies whether of good or evil, he may pride himself in having over-past the glory both of saints and stoics; but the fact would no more justify his oppressors, than did the stubborn endurance of Epictetus the barbarity of his master, who broke his leg. It would be too much, first to inflict a cruelty, and then to take credit for the patience with which it is supported; but

the fact itself is, in this case, more than doubtful. That to a certain point the feelings of the slave grow callous under bondage, may be conceded: this is the mercy of Nature: but that they are wholly extinguished by suffering, is contradicted by facts of too palpable evidence; one of which is, that it is no uncommon thing for Negroes to commit suicide. This I heard from a gentleman of Charleston; and I have since met with the still more unexceptionable testimony of a friend to the Slave Trade.

“ Dr. Williamson, in his ‘ Medical and Miscellaneous Observations relative to the West-India Islands,’ observes: ‘ Negroes anticipate that they will, upon death removing them from that country, be restored to their native land, and enjoy their friends’ society in a future state. The ill-disposed to their masters will sometimes be guilty of suicide; or by a resolute determination resort to dirt-eating, and thence produce disease, and at length death.’ (i. 93.) This is the kind of man who, should he ever hear of the death of Cato, would call it the result of ‘ an ill disposition towards his master, Cæsar.’

“ I remember to have once heard a person assert, from his own experience, that a cargo of Africans expressed great pleasure on finding themselves made slaves, on their arrival in America. A further explanation, however, removed the seeming improbability of this anecdote. They imagined they had been purchased for the purpose of being eaten, and therefore rejoiced in their ignorance, when they discovered they were only to be held in bondage.” Hall, pp. 429—432.

It is impossible to resist the force of this reasoning. It may be evaded by sophistry or opposed by selfishness, or questioned by prejudice or ignorance, but its truth and justice will be self-evident to the mind of every intelligent and candid observer. The consider-

ation of this terrific subject very naturally leads our ingenious author to inquire how it has happened that "slavery and slave dealing," though exhibiting little either in speculation or practice, which is calculated to convince the judgment or captivate the affections, should have found advocates, not merely among slave-traders and slave-holders, but among men of cultivated, and apparently liberal, minds. Without any natural sympathy with cruelty, and without any interest in the question, they still defend these hideous practices, as if they were worthy of being embraced and cherished for the sake of their own native loveliness. Many of them would shudder at inflicting on a single fellow-creature a particle of the privations and sufferings, which they, nevertheless, uphold in argument as fit "to be the portion and daily bread of thousands." We shall, at present, abstain from entering on this extensive and inviting chapter in the history of the human mind, and content ourselves with noticing Mr. Hall's explanation of the fact which has so justly surprised him. He refers it to the influence of authority, to prejudice, or to an inaptitude to investigate any subject beyond the line of their ordinary occupations.

"As such persons scarcely affect to reason, or inquire, it is difficult to discover on what grounds they rest their opinions: the few who pretend to speak from experience, have seldom more to urge than the experience of good West-India dinners; and how can any thing be wrong where people dine so well? The many, who have made up their minds by mere dint of not thinking on the matter, take fast hold upon some one of the many bold falsehoods, or skilful sophisms, with which those interested in the traffic are ever ready to furnish such as find it troublesome, or fancy it unsafe, to use their own understandings;—as for instance—'Negro slaves are better off than the poorer classes in many

European countries. They are quite contented with their situation, except when perverted by their pretended friends. It is the proprietor's interest to use them well, and therefore he does use them well. Or, The abolitionists are methodists, jacobins, or enthusiasts, and therefore unfit to be trusted with reforms of any kind; besides, slavery has existed time out of mind, and why is the present generation to pretend to more wisdom and humanity than their forefathers? Their very good nature leads them to disbelieve most of the cruelties they hear related as connected with the slave-system; or should the evidence of particular facts occasionally overpower their prejudice, they readily admit, that as Negroes are constitutionally different from White men, they require a different treatment; so that what may seem harsh to us, and would in fact be harsh to people of our complexion, is no more to them than a salubrious regimen. Such advocates, however contemptible as logicians, are of great numerical importance. They constitute the standing army of corruption in all shapes; are always to be found among the supporters of power, and may be depended on as the steady friends of whatever is established. To the efforts of the enlightened few, they oppose the inert resistance of impassive matter; a resistance which gains respect by seeming disinterested, and remains unassailable, because, like the tortoise, it presents no vital point of attack. Self-interest takes the field with better armour, and more enterprise; but the combat would be short-lived, did he not, after each discomfiture, find refuge within the shell of his simple ally." Hall, pp. 417—419.

In the United States, indeed, as Mr. Hall admits, the influence of these causes is less powerful than in Europe. In America, few can be uninformed of the actual condition of the slaves; and as they are accustomed thoroughly to discuss all public questions, the

case of the Black population has a better chance of being at least understood by them than by us. Accordingly, in some of the old states, and in all which have recently been admitted into the Union, slavery has been formally excluded from their constitution. The whole of the Eastern and a great part of the Central States, and many enlightened individuals even in the southern provinces, particularly the Quakers, are declared enemies of the system of slavery. It is true, that, for the most part, they oppose it rather as a great political evil, than as a violation of the eternal obligations of humanity and justice : nevertheless, its extent is in this way gradually narrowing. With them there is no dispute, nor, indeed, can there be, respecting the opprobrious and humiliating facts of the case. With us, on the contrary, the only persons who, in general, have an opportunity of viewing with their own eyes the state of colonial bondage, are persons interested in upholding it. And they are induced by tenderness for their own reputation, as well as by the strong feeling of interest, and, we may add, by pride, to throw a veil over the enormities of the system, and to resist every attempt to withdraw it. The advantage which America possesses in this important respect, would encourage a hope of the eventual extinction of this evil at no very distant period, at least, at an earlier period than it would be reasonable to expect it in our own colonial possessions, but for another circumstance on which Mr. Hall, incidentally, but feelingly, touches, and which must have a powerful influence in perpetuating the miseries of slavery in the United States ; we mean, the force of habit. Let any one consider, for a moment, the different sensations with which an individual who had never witnessed the infliction of a wound, and a practised surgeon, would regard the amputation of a limb ;—or the disgust which would be excited in an

inhabitant of some splendid mansion in Grosvenor Square, on being admitted, for the first time, to the occupancy of an apartment in the Borough Compter or Bristol Jail, as compared with the feelings of some old offender who was familiar with all the filth and abominations of the place. A similar difference will be found to exist in the feelings of the man who has a near view of slavery for the first time, and of him whose eye has become familiar with its horrors, or has, perhaps, been accustomed to them from infancy. It cannot be expected that a person born and educated in Carolina, or in Jamaica, should be shocked by those parts of the slave system, which, if viewed by a person of common sensibility for the first time, would fill him with disgust and horror. In one respect, therefore, we are more advantageously situated in this country than in America for judging accurately of the effects of the slave system. The natural feelings which they are calculated to excite are less blunted by familiarity. These remarks are illustrated by what Mr. Hall tells us of the impression he received, when, in travelling southward from Philadelphia, he first entered the slave states.

“The houses, universally shaded with large virandas, seem to give notice of a southern climate; the huts round them, open to the elements, and void of every intention of comfort, tell a less pleasing tale: they inform the traveller he has entered upon a land of masters and slaves, and he beholds the scene marred with wretched dwellings and wretched faces. The eye, which for the first time looks on a slave, feels a painful impression: he is one for whom the laws of humanity are reversed, who has known nothing of society but its injustice, nothing of his fellow-man but his hardened, undisguised, atrocious selfishness. The cowering humility, the expressions of servile respect, with which the Negro approaches the White man, strike on the

senses, not like the courtesy of the French and Italian peasant, giving a grace to Poverty, but with the chilling indication of a crushed spirit: the sound of the lash is in his accents of submission; and the eye which shrinks from mine, caught its fear from that of the task-master. Habit steels us to all things; and it is not to be expected that objects, constantly present, should continue to excite the same sensations which they cause, when looked upon for the first time,—and this, perhaps, is one reason why so much cruelty has been tolerated in the world: but whosoever should look on a slave for the first time in his life, with the same indifferent gaze he would bestow on any casual object, may triumph in the good fortune through which he was born free, but in his heart he is a slave, and, as a moral being, degraded infinitely below the Negro, in whose soul the light of freedom has been extinguished, not by his own insensibility, but by the tyranny of others. Did the miserable condition of the Negro leave him mind for reflection, he might laugh in his chains to see how slavery has stricken the land with ugliness. The smiling villages, and happy population of the Eastern and Central States, give place to the splendid equipages of a few planters, and a wretched Negro population, crawling among filthy hovels—for villages (after crossing the Susquehanna) there are scarcely any; there are only plantations: the very name speaks volumes.” Hall, pp. 318—320.

Let us observe, on the other hand, the effect produced by the force of habit on the moral feelings of a respectable individual, Mr. Duff; a person residing in a remote valley in the state of Virginia, whom Mr. Hall describes as an excellent specimen of the best part of his neighbours. He was remarkably temperate; never uttered an immoral expression; and his disposition seemed in a high degree friendly and benevolent.

“ Yet, mark,” observes our author, “ the withering effect of slavery on the moral feelings ! he was talking of the different ways men had in that part of the country of making money. ‘ Some,’ said he, ‘ purchase droves of hogs, oxen, or horses, in one part of the Union, and drive them for sale to another ; and some buy Negroes in the same way, and drive them, chained together, to different markets : I expect two gentlemen here this evening with a drove.’ I expressed my horror of such traffic : he civilly assented to my observation, but plainly without any similar feeling, and spoke of the gentlemen he expected as if they were just as ‘ honourable men’ as any other fair dealers in the community : luckily I was not cursed with their company. I never chanced to fall in with one of these human droves ; but I borrow from a pleasing little work, written by a Virginian, and entitled, ‘ Letters from Virginia,’ the following description which he gives, in the character of a foreigner newly landed at Norfolk.—

“ ‘ I took the boat this morning, and crossed the ferry over to Portsmouth, the small town which I told you is opposite to this place. It was court day, and a large crowd of people was gathered about the door of the court-house. I had hardly got upon the steps to look in, when my ears were assailed by the voice of singing, and turning round to discover from what quarter it came, I saw a group of about thirty Negroes, of different sizes and ages, following a rough-looking White man, who sat carelessly lolling in his sulkey. They had just turned round the corner, and were coming up the main street to pass by the spot where I stood, on their way out of town. As they came nearer I saw some of them loaded with chains to prevent their escape ; while others had hold of each other’s hands, strongly grasped, as if to support themselves in their affliction. I particularly noticed a poor mother, with an infant sucking at her

breast as she walked along, while two small children had hold of her apron on either side, almost running to keep up with the rest. They came along singing a little wild hymn, of sweet and mournful melody, flying, by a divine instinct of the heart, to the consolation of religion, the last refuge of the unhappy, to support them in their distress. The sulkey now stopped before the tavern, at a little distance beyond the court-house, and the driver got out. "My dear sir," said I to a person who stood near me, "can you tell me what these poor people have been doing? what is their crime? and what is to be their punishment?" "O," said he, "its nothing at all, but a parcel of Negroes sold to Carolina; and that man is their driver, who has bought them." "But what have they done, that they should be sold into banishment?" "Done!" said he: "nothing at all that I know of: their masters wanted money, I suppose, and these drivers give good prices." Here the driver, having supplied himself with brandy, and his horse with water (the poor Negroes of course wanted nothing), stepped into his chair again, cracked his whip and drove on, while the miserable exiles followed in funeral procession behind him.'" Hall, pp. 357—360.

The view which Mr. Hall has given of the slavery of the United States is substantially confirmed by Mr. Fearon, who states "the treatment of the Negroes throughout these states" to be "as villainous as can well be imagined." (p. 268.) He has given us a transcript of some of the provisions of a law, not an ancient and now obsolete law, but a law passed by the city council of New Orleans, the capital of Louisiana, on the 17th day of October, 1817, for the government of the slave population.

By this law, any slave found occupying, or sleeping in, any house, out-house, building, or inclosure, not his owner's or immediate employer's, without a ticket

from such owner or employer, expressly describing the place, and specifying the time for which the licence is granted, shall be committed to gaol by any officer of police, or any other White person, *there to receive twenty lashes*, on a warrant from the mayor or justice of the peace, unless his owner or master shall previously pay five dollars for him, with all costs.

The sixth clause of this Act confines assemblies of slaves for dancing or other merriment exclusively to Sundays, and to such open and public places as the mayor shall appoint; such assemblies not to continue later than sun-set: every violation of the rule to be punished with ten to twenty-five lashes, besides being liable to the penalties of the preceding clause.

The four following clauses, which we give entire, will sufficiently satisfy our readers of the humanity of this modern *Code Noir*.

“ No person giving a ball to Free People of Colour shall, on any pretext, admit or suffer to be admitted to said ball any slave, on penalty of a fine from ten to fifty dollars; and any slave admitted to any such ball shall receive fifteen lashes.

“ Every slave, except such as may be blind or infirm, who shall walk in any street or open place with a cane, club, or other stick, shall be carried to the police gaol, where he shall receive twenty-five lashes, and shall moreover forfeit every such cane, club, or other stick, to any White person seizing the same; and every slave carrying any arms whatever, shall be punished in the manner prescribed by the Black Code of this State.

“ If any slave shall be guilty of whooping or hallooing any where in the city or suburbs, or of making any clamorous noise, or of singing aloud any indecent song, he or she shall, for each and every such offence, receive at the police gaol, on a warrant from the mayor, or any justice of peace, a number of twenty lashes or stripes;

and if any such offence be committed on board any vessel, the master or commander thereof shall forfeit and pay a sum of twenty dollars for each and every such offence.

“ Every slave who shall be guilty of disrespect towards any White person, or shall insult any Free person shall receive thirty lashes, upon an order from the mayor, or justice of the peace.” Fearon, pp. 277, 278.

If the subject were not too serious for mirth, there is something perfectly ludicrous in these legislative enactments. They are only to be explained on the principle to which we have already referred. We are familiar in private life with the strange effects which often proceed from terror when it has once taken full possession of the mind; the laughable exaggerations and irrational expedients to which it leads. Here, however, its unrestrained influence compromises the comfort and happiness of whole communities, and that not for a passing moment, but for ages, and throughout the miserable succession of generations yet unborn.

A practical proof of the wretchedness and degradation, to which this unhappy class of our fellow-creatures is reduced, is exhibited, we are told, at “ every tavern” in the slave states; where, Mr. Hall informs us, advertisements are seen posted for runaway slaves. “ The barbarous phraseology in which they were drawn up sometimes amused” him; but he was more frequently disgusted with “ the ferocious spirit of revenge” they too plainly expressed. An incident, which we quote from Mr. Fearon, speaks the same painful truth still more strongly. The scene is laid at Lawes’ hotel at Middletown, in the state of Kentucky.

“ A few minutes before dinner, my attention was excited by the piteous cries of a human voice accompanied with the loud cracking of a whip. Following the sound, I found that it issued from a log-barn, the

door of which was fastened. Peeping through the logs, I perceived the bar-keeper of the tavern, together with a stout man, more than six feet high, who was called colonel ———, and a Negro boy about 14 years of age, stript naked, receiving the lashes of these monsters, who *relieved* each other in the use of a horse-whip; the poor boy fell down upon his knees several times, begging and praying that they would not kill him, and that he would do any thing they liked: this produced no cessation in their exercise. At length Mr. Lawes, the master of the hotel arrived, told the valiant colonel and his humane employer, the bar-keeper, to desist, and that the boy's refusal to cut wood was in obedience to his (Mr. L.'s) directions. Colonel ——— said, that 'he did not know what the Nigger had done, but that the bar-keeper requested his assistance to whip Cæsar; of course he lent him a hand, being no more than he should expect Mr. Lawes to do for him under similar circumstances.' At table Mr. Lawes said, that he had not been so vexed for seven years. This expression gave me pleasure, and also afforded me, as I thought, an opportunity to reprobate the general system of slavery; but not one voice joined with mine: each gave vent in the following language to the superabundant quantity of the milk of human kindness, with which their breasts were overflowing:—

" 'I guess he deserved all he got.'

" 'It would have been of small account if the Nigger had been whipt to death.'

" 'I always serve my Niggers that way: there is nothing else so good for them.'

" It appeared that this boy was the property of a regular slave-dealer, who was then absent at Natchez with a cargo. Mr. Lawes' humanity fell lamentably in my estimation when he stated, 'that whipping Niggers, if they were his own, was perfectly right, and they al-

ways deserved it; but what made him mad was, that the boy was left under his care by a friend, and he did not like to have a friend's property injured.'

"There is in this instance of the treatment of a Negro, nothing that in this State is at all singular; and much as I condemned New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, when in those sections, I must now give them the character of enlightened humanity, compared with this State, in which such conduct as that I have described, is tolerated and approved." Fearon, pp. 239—241.

The following relation, however, of Mr. Hall, is of a still more affecting description. It is an account which he has given us of the trial and execution of a Negro, that took place during his stay in Charleston, South Carolina.

"A man died on board a merchant ship, apparently in consequence of poison mixed with the dinner served up to the ship's company. The cabin-boy and cook were suspected, because they were, from their occupations, the only persons on board who did not partake of the mess, the effects of which began to appear as soon as it was tasted. As the offence was committed on the high seas, the cook, though a Negro, became entitled to the benefit of a jury, and, with the cabin-boy, was put on his trial. The boy, a fine looking lad, and wholly unabashed by his situation, was readily acquitted. The Negro's turn was next. He was a man of low stature, ill-shapen, and with a countenance singularly disgusting. The proofs against him were, first, that he was cook; so who else could have poisoned the mess? It was indeed overlooked, that two of the crew had absconded since the ship came into port. Secondly, he had been heard to utter expressions of ill-humour before he went on board: that part of the evidence was indeed suppress which went to

explain these expressions. The real proof, however, was written in his skin, and in the uncouth lines of his countenance. He was found guilty.

“ Mr. Crafts, junior, a gentleman of the Charleston bar, who, from motives of humanity, had undertaken his defence, did not think a man ought to die for his colour, albeit it was the custom of the country; and moved in consequence for a new trial, on the ground of partial and insufficient evidence; but the judge, who had urged his condemnation with a vindictive earnestness, intrenched himself in forms, and found the law gave him no power in favour of mercy. He then forwarded a representation of the case to the President, through one of the senators of the state; but the senator ridiculed the idea of interesting himself for the life of a Negro, who was therefore left to his cell and the hangman. In this situation he did not, however, forsake himself; and it was now, when prejudice and persecution had spent their last arrow on him, that he seemed to put on his proper nature, to vindicate not only his innocence, but the moral equality of his race, and those mental energies which the White man's pride would deny to the shape of his head and the woolliness of his hair. Maintaining the most undeviating tranquillity, he conversed with ease and cheerfulness, whenever his benevolent counsel, who continued his kind attentions to the last, visited his cell. I was present on one of these occasions, and observed his tone and manner, neither sullen nor desperate, but quiet and resigned, suggesting whatever occurred to him on the circumstances of his own case, with as much calmness as if he had been uninterested in the event; yet as if he deemed it a duty to omit none of the means placed within his reach for vindicating his innocence. He had constantly attended the exhortations of a Methodist preacher, who, for conscience sake, visited ‘those who were in prison;’ and, having thus strengthened his spirit

with religion, on the morning of his execution, breakfasted, as usual, heartily; but before he was led out, he requested permission to address a few words of advice to the companions of his captivity. ‘I have observed much in them,’ he added, ‘which requires to be amended; and the advice of a man in my situation may be respected.’ A circle was accordingly formed in his cell, in the midst of which he seated himself, and addressed them at some length, with a sober and collected earnestness of manner, on the profligacy which he had noted in their behaviour, while they had been fellow-prisoners; recommending to them the rules of conduct prescribed by that religion in which he now found his support and consolation.

“Certainly, if we regard the quality and condition of the actors only, there is an infinite distance betwixt this scene and the parting of Socrates with his disciples: should we, however, put away from our thoughts such differences as are merely accidental, and seize that point of coincidence which is most interesting and important; namely, the triumph of mental energy over the most clinging weaknesses of our nature, the Negro will not appear wholly unworthy of a comparison with the sage of Athens. The latter occupied an exalted station in the public eye; though persecuted even unto death and ignominy, by a band of triumphant despots, he was surrounded in his last moments by his faithful friends and disciples, to whose talents and affection he might safely trust the vindication of his fame, and the unsullied whiteness of his memory: he knew that his hour of glory must come, and that it would not pass away. The Negro had none of these aids, he was a man friendless and despised; the sympathies of society were locked up against him; he was to atone for an odious crime by an ignominious death; the consciousness of his innocence was confined to his own bosom, there probably to sleep

for ever : to the rest of mankind he was a wretched criminal ; an object, perhaps, of contempt and detestation, even to the guilty companions of his prison-house ; he had no philosophy with which to reason down those natural misgivings, which may be supposed to precede the violent dissolution of life and body : he could make no appeal to posterity to reverse an unjust judgment. To have borne all this patiently, would have been much : he bore it heroically.

“ Having ended his discourse, he was conducted to the scaffold, where having calmly surveyed the crowds collected to witness his fate, he requested leave to address them. Having obtained permission, he stepped firmly to the edge of the scaffold, and having commanded silence by his gestures, ‘ You are come,’ said he, ‘ to be spectators of my sufferings : you are mistaken ; there is not a person in this crowd but suffers more than I do. I am cheerful and contented, for I am innocent.’ He then observed, that he truly forgave all those who had taken any part in his condemnation, and believed that they had acted conscientiously from the evidence before them ; and disclaimed all idea of imputing guilt to any one. He then turned to his counsel, who, with feelings which honoured humanity, had attended him to the scaffold ; ‘ To you, Sir,’ said he, ‘ I am indeed most grateful : had you been my son, you could not have acted by me more kindly :’ and observing his tears, he continued ; ‘ This, Sir, distresses me beyond any thing I have felt yet : I entreat you will feel no distress on my account : I am happy.’ Then praying to Heaven to reward his benevolence, he took leave of him, and signified his readiness to die ; but requested he might be excused from having his eyes and hands bandaged : wishing, with an excusable pride, to give this final proof of his unshaken firmness : he, however,

submitted, on this point, to the representations of the sheriff, and died without the quivering of a muscle.

“The spectators, who had been drawn together, partly by idle curiosity, and partly by a detestation of his supposed crime, retired with tears for his fate, and execrations on his murderers.” Hall, pp. 433—438.

We might fairly challenge the writers of romance to rival this story in depth of interest. We should only weaken its effect by any comments of our own.

The depressed and degraded condition of the Negro slave is communicated, as might be expected, by an almost infallible contagion, to the whole of the free Black and Coloured population of the United States. Nor are even those parts of the Union, called, by way of distinction, Free States, in which slavery is abolished by law, exempt from this charge. The curse of slavery pursues the descendants of slaves to the latest generation. So long as the slightest tinge of African blood can be discovered to flow in their veins, however professedly liberal the institutions of any particular state may chance to be, the sentence of civil disability and degradation continues in force. There exists, as Mr. Fearon well expresses it, in *all* these states, *not excepting any*, “a penal law deeply written in the *minds* of the whole White population, which subjects their Coloured fellow-citizens to unconditional contumely and never-ceasing insult. No respectability, however unquestionable; no property, however large; no character, however unblemished, will gain a man, whose body is, in American estimation, *cursed* with even a twentieth portion of the blood of his African ancestry, admission into society. They are considered as mere Pariahs, as outcasts and vagrants on the face of the earth.” These persons, though many of them are possessed of the rights of citizenship, it would be little to say, are not admitted to the exercise of their civil franchises; they are not ad-

mitted to a participation of the same religious privileges. We are told by the Abbé du Bois, in his account of the Hindoos, as well as by Dr. C. Buchanan, in his *Christian Researches*, that the transcendent greatness of Juggernaut levels all distinctions among his votaries; and that Bramins and Soodras are, in his presence, melted down into one common state of prostration and abasement. In Christian America, the case is different. The god whom they worship is not the God who is "no respecter of persons," and who "hath made of one blood all nations of men." Even in Philadelphia and New York, there are "African churches" appropriated to "those native Americans who are Black, or have any shade of colour darker than White." Though nominally citizens, they "are not admitted into the churches which are visited by Whites." (p. 167.) In perfect conformity with this spirit, observes Mr. Fearon, is the fact that, in New York, the most degraded White will not walk the street with a Negro; so that although New York is a free state, it is so only on parchment, the Black and Coloured Americans being practically and politically slaves; thus shewing, that "the laws of the mind, are, after all, infinitely more strong and more effective than those of the statute book." p. 61.

The following anecdote will throw some farther light on this subject.

"Soon after landing at New York," says Mr. Fearon, "I called at a hair-dresser's in Broadway, nearly opposite the city-hall: the man in the shop was a Negro. He had nearly finished with me, when a Black man, very respectably dressed, came into the shop, and sat down. The barber inquired if he wanted the proprietor or his boss (master), as he termed him, who was also a Black; the answer was in the negative, but that he wished to have his hair cut. My man turned upon his heel, and, with the greatest contempt, muttered in a tone

of proud importance, 'We do not cut Coloured men here, Sir.' The poor fellow walked out without replying, exhibiting in his countenance confusion, humiliation, and mortification. I immediately requested, that if the refusal was on account of my being present, he might be called back. The hair-dresser was astonished: 'You cannot be in earnest, Sir,' he said. I assured him that I was so, and that I was much concerned in witnessing the refusal from no other cause than that his skin was of a darker tinge than my own. He stopped the motion of his scissars: and after a pause of some seconds, in which his eyes were fixed upon my face, he said, 'Why, I guess as how, Sir, what you say is mighty elegant, and you're an elegant man; but I guess you are not of these parts.' — 'I am from England,' said I, 'where we have neither so cheap nor so enlightened a government as yours, but we have no slaves.' — 'Ay, I guessed you were not raised here: you salt-water people are mighty grand to Coloured people; you are not so proud, and I guess you have more to be proud of: now I reckon you do not know that my boss would not have a single ugly or clever gentleman come to his store, if he cut Coloured men: now my boss, I guess, ordered me to turn out every Coloured man from the store right away; and if I did not, he would send me off slick; for the slimmest gentleman in York would not come to his store if Coloured men were let in. But you know all that, Sir, I guess, without my telling you: you are an elegant gentleman too, Sir.' I assured him that I was ignorant of the fact which he stated; but which, from the earnestness of his manner, I concluded must be true." pp. 58, 59.

"At the dinner-table I commenced a relation of this occurrence to three American gentlemen, one of whom was a doctor, the others were in the law: they were men of education and of liberal opinions. When I

arrived at the point of the Black being turned out, they exclaimed, ‘ Ay right, perfectly right : I would never go to a barber’s where a Coloured man was cut !’ Observe, these gentlemen were not from the south ; they are residents of New York, and I believe were born there.” Fearon, p. 60.

But let us listen to the testimony of Mr. Hall on the same subject. He is speaking of Carolina. There, he says, the condition of a free Man of Colour is, in fact, scarcely preferable to that of a slave.

“ Subjected to the same mode of trial, exposed to the same jealous surveillance, carefully excluded from all the rights and privileges of citizenship, and surrounded by every kind of snares, both legal and illegal, his freedom seems but a mockery superadded to oppression. The statute declares, that every Man of Colour shall be presumed a slave : every newspaper is a commentary on the injustice and barbarity of this enactment ; every day Men of Colour are advertised as taken up on suspicion of being slaves : they are committed to jail, and if no owner appears, are sold to pay expenses. But the direct operation of the law is not all the free Man of Colour has to dread.

“ The humane exertions of some gentlemen of the Charleston bar have lately brought to light a singular system for kidnapping free Negroes, and selling them as slaves into Kentucky, or any state at a distance from their connections. . . The agents were a justice of the peace, a constable, and a slave dealer.

“ The process was as simple as unblushing villainy could devise. . . A victim having been selected, one of the firm applied to the justice, upon a sham charge of assault, or similar offence, for a writ, which was immediately issued and served by the constable, and the Negro conveyed to prison. Here, without friends or money, he is to await his trial for some unknown crime

charged against him by some unknown accuser: no wonder if, in this desolate condition, his spirits sink, and his fears anticipate the worst: the constable now appears, exaggerates the dangers of his situation; explains how small is his chance of being liberated, even if innocent, by reason of the amount of the jail fees and other legal expenses; but he knows a worthy man who is interested in his behalf, and will do what is necessary to procure his freedom, upon no harder condition than an engagement to serve him for a certain number of years. It may be supposed, the Negro is persuaded; ‘influenced, perhaps, (as the counsel for the defendants observed on the trial,) by the charms of a country life.’ The worthy slave-dealer now appears on the stage. The indenture of bondage is ratified in presence of the worthy magistrate and constable, who share the price of blood, and the victim is hurried on ship-board to be seen no more.

“This traffic had been long carried on, when humanity discovered and exposed it in a court of justice; but since, by the present law, there is no such offence as man-stealing, it could be punished as false imprisonment only. Should not, however, the shame of discovery produce a stronger impression on the parties engaged in this iniquitous traffic, than can be expected from their depraved habits, it is more than probable it will continue to be carried on with keener and perhaps more atrocious dexterity than before.” Hall, pp. 424—426.

Let it not, however, be supposed that the Black and Coloured race alone experience the pernicious consequences of the prevalence of slavery. The *curse* has reached beyond them, and the moral debasement which it has engendered in the minds of the chief actors in this drama of guilt and blood—in the minds of the masters of slaves, furnishes a striking comment on that

passage of Holy Writ; "They shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." Is it possible for any serious mind to read the following extracts without acknowledging the righteous government and retributive justice of the Almighty?

"The existence of slavery in the United States has a most visible effect upon the national character. It necessarily brutalizes the minds of the southern and western inhabitants; it lowers, indeed, the tone of humane and correct feeling throughout the Union; and imperceptibly contributes to the existence of that great difference which here exists between theory and practice." Fearon, pp. 378, 379.

Mr. Hall gives his opinion upon the subject somewhat more at length.

"It is impossible to consider the character of the southern states, without again adverting to the pernicious effects of slavery.

"Land cultivated by slaves requires a considerable capital, and will therefore be divided among a small number of proprietors. Experience, too, shews that the quantity of labour performed by slaves is much below that of an equal number of free cultivators; the number of persons deriving support from the soil will consequently be less; but the loss is not in quantity only, the quality is proportionably deteriorated. He who commands the sweat of others, will be little inclined to toil himself*; the inclination will diminish with the necessity. The fact is so consonant with this remark, that in the southern states, the fisheries, and all branches of active exertion, fall into the hands of the New Englanders: so much so, that the city of Charleston is supplied with fish by smacks from Marble-head and

* "Of the proprietors of slaves, a very small proportion, indeed, are ever seen to labour." Jefferson's Notes, p. 241."

Boston. Climate might be supposed to have a partial influence in producing this effect, were not such individuals as are compelled by the nature of their occupations to rely much on their own efforts found no ways inferior, in attainments and application, to the same description of persons in the more temperate portions of the Union. Nay, have not almost all the sultriest regions of the globe been alternately the seats of sloth and enterprize?

“ The same distribution of property which renders labour unnecessary to its proprietor, is no less fatal to his mental improvement. Experience informs us, that means and leisure are less powerful excitements to study than the spur of necessity, and the hope of profit. Information will be first sought, that it may be useful; it will afterwards be pursued for the pleasure of the acquisition only. The planter has, therefore, been ever reckoned amongst the least enlightened members of society; but, says a proverb, those whom the devil finds idle, he sets about his own work. Dissipation must be always the resource of the unoccupied and ill-instructed.

“ If the political effects of slavery are pernicious to the citizen, its moral effects are still more fatal to the man. ‘ There must doubtless’ (says Mr. Jefferson) ‘ be an unhappy influence on the manners of the people, produced by the existence of slavery among us. The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions; the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it, for man is an imitative animal. The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives loose to the worst of passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised

in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities. The man must be a prodigy who can retain his morals and manners undepraved by such circumstances.' Notes, p. 241.

"We know the time of prodigies is past, and that natural effects will follow their causes. The manners of the lower classes in the Southern States are brutal and depraved *. Those of the upper, corrupted by power, are frequently arrogant and assuming: unused to restraint or contradiction of any kind, they are necessarily quarrelsome; and in their quarrels, the native ferocity of their hearts breaks out. Duelling is not only in general vogue and fashion, but is practised with circumstances of peculiar vindictiveness. It is usual when two persons have agreed to fight, for each to go out regularly and practise at a mark, in the presence of their friends, during the interval which precedes their meeting: one of the parties, therefore, commonly falls.

"Did the whole of the above causes operate with undiminished influence, the result would be horrible; but there are several circumstances continually working in mitigation of those evils." Hall, pp. 457—460.

The testimony which we have here adduced, has received the most decisive confirmation from another, and, it will be thought by some, a less suspicious, quarter. Mr. Morris Birkbeck, both in his "Notes on a Journey in America," and in his "Letters from the Illinois," appears to have laboured to convey to his countrymen a favourable impression, not only of the

* "The stage-drivers, for instance, are more inhuman, and much inferior in decency of behaviour to the Negroes, who are sometimes employed in the same capacity; so that it seems not improbable, that the effects of slavery, upon the lower orders, at least, are more debasing to the governing class, than to the governed."

United States as a scene of profitable enterprize, but of the general character and manners of its inhabitants. But what is his representation of the nature of slavery, and its effects on the moral and intellectual qualities of the American population? Let the friends and advocates of our slave-system, and, above all, let our members of Parliament, who may be called to revise that system, weigh it well. It is replete with considerations of momentous import. The passage will be found in Birkbeck's "Notes," p. 20.

"May 10. I saw two female slaves and their children sold by auction in the street; an incident of common occurrence here, though horrifying to myself and many other strangers. I could hardly bear to see them handled and examined like cattle; and when I heard their sobs, and saw the big tears roll down their cheeks at the thoughts of being separated, I could not refrain from weeping with them. In selling these unhappy beings, little regard is had to the parting of the nearest relations. Virginia prides itself on the comparative mildness of its treatment of the slaves; and, in fact, they increase in numbers, many being annually supplied from this state to those farther south, where the treatment is said to be much more severe. There are regular dealers who buy them up, and drive them in gangs, chained together, to a southern market. I am informed, that few weeks pass without some of them being marched through this place. A traveller told me, that he saw, two weeks ago, one hundred and twenty sold by auction in the streets of Richmond; and that they filled the air with their lamentations.

"It has also been confidently alleged, that the condition of slaves in Virginia, under the mild treatment they are said to experience, is preferable to that of our English labourers. I know and lament the degrading state of dependent poverty to which the latter have

been gradually reduced by the operation of laws originally designed for their comfort and protection. I know also that many slaves pass their lives in comparative ease, and seem to be unconscious of their bonds, and that the *most wretched* of our paupers might envy the allotment of the *happy* Negro. This is not, however, instituting a fair comparison, to bring the opposite extremes of the two classes into competition. Let us take a view of some particulars which operate generally.

“ In England, exertion is not the result of personal fear; in Virginia, it is the prevailing stimulus.

“ The slave is punished for mere *indolence*, at the discretion of an *overseer*: the peasant is only punished by the law, when guilty of a crime.

“ In England, the labourer and his employer are equal in the eye of the law: here the law affords the slave no protection, unless a White man gives testimony in his favour.

“ Here, any White man may insult a Black with impunity; whilst the English peasant, should he receive a blow from his employer, might and would return it with interest, and afterwards have his remedy at law for the aggression.

“ The testimony of a peasant weighs as much as that of a lord in a court of justice; but the testimony of a slave is never admitted at all, in a case where a White man is opposed to him.

“ A few weeks ago, in the streets of Richmond, a friend of mine saw a White boy wantonly throw quicklime in the face of a Negro-man. The man shook the lime from his jacket, and some of it accidentally reached the eyes of the young brute. This casual retaliation excited the resentment of the brother of the boy, who complained to the slave's owner, and actually had him punished with thirty lashes. This would not have happened to an English peasant.

" I must, however, do this justice to the slave-master of Virginia: it was not from him that I ever heard a defence of slavery; some extenuation, on the score of expediency or necessity, is the utmost range now taken by that description of reasoners who, in former times, would have attempted to support the principle as well as the practice.

" Perhaps it is in its depraving influence on the moral senses of both slave and master, that slavery is most deplorable. Brutal cruelty, we may hope, is a rare and transient mischief; but the degradation of soul is universal.

" All America is now suffering in morals, through the baneful influence of Negro slavery, partially tolerated, corrupting justice at the very source."

" Slavery," he says in another place, "that broadest, foulest blot which still prevails over so large a portion of the United States, will circumscribe my choice within narrow limits; for if political liberty be so precious, that to obtain it I can forego the well-earned comforts of an English home, it must not be *to degrade and corrupt my children by the practice of slave-keeping*. This curse has taken fast hold of Kentucky, Tennessee, and all the new states to the South."

Such is the delineation of Negro slavery, as it exists in the United States, which has been given by three independent and impartial eye-witnesses. A writer in a contemporary Review, not remarkable for partiality to British in preference to trans-Atlantic policy, on contemplating the picture, expresses his keen indignation in terms which do him the highest honour. "The great curse of America," he observes, "is the institution of slavery, of itself far more than the foulest blot upon their national character, and an evil which counterbalances all the excisemen, licensers, and tax-gatherers of England. No virtuous man ought to trust his own character, or the character of his children, to the demo-

ralizing effects produced by commanding slaves. Justice, gentleness, pity, and humility, soon give way before them. Conscience suspends its functions. The love of command, the impatience of restraint, get the better of every other feeling; and cruelty has no other limit than fear. That such feelings and such practices should exist among men who know the value of liberty, and profess to understand its principles, is the consummation of wickedness. Every American who loves his country should dedicate his whole life, and every faculty of his soul, to efface the foul stain from its character. If nations rank according to their wisdom and their virtue, what right has the American, a scourger and murderer of slaves, to compare himself with the least and lowest of the European nations? *much more of this great and humane country*, where the greatest lord dares not lay a finger upon the meanest peasant? What is freedom, where all are not free; where the greatest of God's blessings is limited, with impious caprice, to the colour of the body? And these are the men who taunt the English with their corrupt Parliament, with their buying and selling votes. Let the world judge which is the most liable to censure; — we who, in the midst of our rottenness, have torn off the manacles of slaves all over the world; or they who, with their idle purity and useless perfection, have remained mute and careless, while groans echoed and whips clanked round the very walls of their spotless Congress. We wish well to America, we rejoice in her prosperity, and are delighted to resist the absurd impertinence with which the character of her people is often treated in this country: but *the existence of slavery in America is an atrocious crime, with which no measures can be kept*, for which her situation affords no sort of apology, which makes liberty itself distrusted, and the boast of it disgusting." *Edinburgh Review*, No. LXI. pp. 146—148.

This is just and spirited. Every reproach which the passage contains applies to the United States with an accuracy which admits of no cavil, and with a force which cannot be resisted. May it produce its due effect on the population of that rising empire! And may they be induced, while they yet may, to avert from themselves, by repentance and reformation, the judgments which, if the word of God be true, must sooner or later overtake such cruel and impious oppression! "The people of the land have used oppression, and have vexed the poor and needy, yea they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them: I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath. Their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God." Ezek. xxii. 29.

There is, however, one circumstance in the extract we have given from the Edinburgh Review, which has not a little surprised us: we mean, that the reviewer should have chosen to place Great Britain in *contrast* with the United States on this occasion. We know not whether the writer intended that this part of his observations should be understood ironically. If so, he has failed of his aim. At the same time we admit, that a more severe and biting satire on this country could hardly be imagined than he has in effect conveyed by thus bringing her forward to darken the shade which he has thrown over the internal policy of America. In this view, every syllable he has uttered is wormwood and gall. Let our readers look back to the extract; and as they cast their eye over it a second time, let them substitute Great Britain for America, and then say whether every expression of vituperation, every term of reprobation and disgust, may not be applied with at least equal force and equal justice to the one country as to the other. Is the institution of slavery less a *curse* in Great

Britain than in America? Is there something so peculiar in the moral atmosphere of a British colony, that the "justice, gentleness, pity, and humility," which wither elsewhere under the influence of slavery, should there flourish; that conscience should there retain its dominion, and prevent all the hideous effects so well described as the inevitable result of unmeasured despotism? — Is "the value of liberty" less known, and are "its principles" less understood in England than in America? Are "the feelings and practices" involved in our system of colonial bondage less opposed to those principles, or are they less "the consummation of wickedness," because they exist under the sanction of the British government, rather than under that of the United States? *Is it less the duty of every Englishman than of "every American, who loves his country, to dedicate his whole life, and every faculty of his soul, to efface this foul stain from its character?"* In "this great and humane country" are there "no scourgers of slaves?" Can we forget that "all are not free with us?" Or has the enfranchisement of our colonial bondsmen indeed taken place? And are those laws at length abrogated in the British colonies, which, "with impious caprice, limit the greatest of God's blessings to the colour of the body?" We have done much, it is true, to effect the universal abolition of the *Slave-trade*; but what single legislative measure have we, as a nation, yet adopted, not merely for "tearing off the manacles" of our Black and Coloured fellow-subjects in the colonies, but for lightening the chains of their servitude, for protecting them against oppression, for raising them in the scale of being? The pathos of a few occasional speeches, the barren generalities of an address to the Crown, the printing of reams of barbarous enactments, or horrid recitals, or studied apologies for slavery, will not fulfil the obligations we are under to these wretched outcasts.

It may be true, that their groans do not echo, nor their chains clank, around the walls of our Parliament, as around those of Congress; but how many owners of slaves may be reckoned in the two branches of our legislature, whose voice, during the last thirty years, may possibly have assisted in preventing either the echo of the groan, or the clank of the chain, from reaching our ears? But it has been beyond the power of the loudest clamours either of interest or prejudice to drown them entirely; and the stifled sigh, the suppressed but imploring murmur, have only pierced the deeper into the heart, on account of the distance from which they have been wafted, and the efforts made to obstruct their passage. But whether the British Parliament catch the sound or not, it has entered, doubtless, “into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.” And if it be true, as we do most conscientiously believe it to be, that “*the existence of slavery in America is an atrocious crime with which no measures can be kept,*” is it possible for us to contemplate its existence within the British dominions in a less fearful light?

But we shall be told, that the slavery existing in our West Indian colonies differs materially in many respects from that which prevails in the United States. We do not mean to deny this. We believe that, in one or two particulars, the comparison might prove favourable to our own colonies. The slaves suffer less from cold in the West Indies than in America; and we do not mean to affirm that they are *excluded* from places of worship, however infrequently they may, in point of fact, attend them. In all the grand and essential points of personal comfort, however, the balance turns greatly on the other side. In America, they are in general more abundantly supplied with food. The labour of the field is there, too, for the most part, of a lighter kind than on sugar plantations. Task work is also more prevalent in

America than in the West Indies, where labour is usually performed by gangs under the immediate impulse of the lash. Besides which, the Black and Coloured population have a readier access to the means of religious instruction in America than in our colonies*.

* That the treatment of the slaves in the British colonies must be much more oppressive than it is even in the United States, would seem to be established beyond controversy by the following comparative statement of the Negro population of Jamaica and of the United States, in the years 1790 and 1820.

In 1790, the number of slaves in Jamaica is stated by Bryan Edwards at 250,000, which, however, he considered under-rated.

In 1810, from calculations founded on the Reports of the Assembly of Jamaica, they must have been about 320,000. — In 1817 they were rated, on what was affirmed to be a more accurate census, at 345,252, being an addition of only 95,252, in the whole of that period; and yet from the year 1787 to the period of the Abolition of the Slave-trade in 1808, 188,785 appear to have been added by importation from Africa to the stock in that island, though the commencement of that importation is four years prior to 1791; yet this will probably be counterbalanced by the admitted inaccuracy of the returns in 1791.

In the year 1790, the slave population of the whole of the United States was	-	-	-	-	676,696
In the year 1800 it was	-	-	-	-	894,444
In - 1810	-	-	-	-	1,191,364
In - 1820	-	-	-	-	1,531,431

The natural increase would have appeared to be considerably greater, if 174,142 had not been added to the free Blacks during that period, about 100,000 of them by manumission. — We see that between 1790 and 1800 the rate of increase was

- - - - - 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

Between 1800 and 1810 - - - - - 33 $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

And between 1810 and 1820 - - - - - 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

The small difference in the increase from 1800 to 1810 must be attributed to the partial importation from Africa during a short part of that period, but this will be far more than counterbalanced by the number manumitted.

In 1790, then, Jamaica had a slave population of above - 250,000

In 1817 and in 1820, (the number will probably be found nearly the same in both years,) - - - - - 345,252

In 1791, the United States' slave population was - 676,696

In 1820, ditto, ditto, - - - - - 1,531,431

If a system not more rigorous than the American system had been pursued in Jamaica, the population of that island ought to have been in the year 1820, 565,775.

With 188,785 added by importation, still the population of Jamaica falls 220,523 short of what it ought to have been, making a difference altogether

Our main purpose, in the present article, has been, by exhibiting a series of facts, to fix the value of certain general principles which apply to the state of Negro slavery in all parts of the civilized world, and to demonstrate that, in its leading characteristics, and more prominent tendencies and effects, it is, *when uncontrolled by some external influence* which shall make the emancipation of the slave the ultimate end of its regulations, the same revolting institution, whether administered by Spaniards or Portuguese, Frenchmen or Dutchmen, Englishmen or Americans. The slavery of the African race, indeed, as it exists in the dominions of these nations, is accompanied by circumstances of degradation peculiar to itself, arising from the colour of the unhappy subjects of it. Still the tendency to abuse the power with which domestic slavery, under any form, necessarily invests the master, is a principle which rests not on any modern discoveries, but which comes to us upheld by the historical records of every succeeding age. The only hope which can be indulged of effectually counteracting this tendency, is from the vigilant intervention of some authority superior to that of the master, untainted with his prejudices, and uninfluenced by his selfish views. In the colonies of Spain, for example, where the government has exercised the entire power of legislation, more has been done to alleviate the hardships of Negro slavery, and to pave the way for its gradual extinction, than in the colonies of any other nation. In the British colonies, on the other hand, as well as in the United States of America, *where the makers of the laws are also the masters of the slaves*, the legal constitution of slavery has been written in characters of blood, and hung round

of 409,308. The bare statement of such a waste of human life, such a cruel counteraction of the universal tendency of mankind to increase, renders all comment superfluous.

In all those attributes of cruelty and revenge which jealousy, contempt, and terror could suggest. If in our own colonies, since the agitation of the Slave-trade controversy, the barbarous rigour of their earlier statute-books has been in some respects softened, may we not fairly ascribe the change to the influence of public opinion at home, operating on the fears of the masters of slaves, and forcing them to the reluctant adoption of enactments less revolting in their terms, and which, from their apparently humane bearing, might have the effect of averting the dreaded intervention of the imperial legislature? But if this view of the subject be correct, and in whatever degree it is so, the written law will be apt to fail of its effect, and to be at variance with the general practice, unless a very vigilant and efficient superintendence over its execution shall be exercised by the supreme authorities of the state. Hence arises the strong moral obligation of parliamentary interference for the protection of the servile population in our colonies, for restraining and punishing the abuse of the master's power, and for gradually, but effectually, putting an end to slavery itself. And although slavery, in existing circumstances, cannot, we fear, be eradicated but by cautious and progressive measures, yet surely by means of judicious regulations, vigorously executed and vigilantly enforced, it might be divested in the interval of at least a part of its malignity.

Let it not, however, be supposed that we mean to prefer against the West Indians, as a body, any charge of extraordinary criminality, or to intimate that they are peculiar objects of public reprehension. It is not so much *they* who are in fault, as the system with which they are, in many, perhaps in most, cases, involuntarily connected. It is their misfortune to have been born, perhaps, in a slave colony, and to have been familiarized with the view of slavery from the moment of their birth.

It would be to exact from such persons something more than we are entitled to look for, something more than is consistent with the ordinary phenomena of human nature, were we, in their case, to regard as a mark of singular depravity or inhumanity the circumstance of their differing, in their feelings and habits of thinking on this subject, from those who have been more favourably situated for forming a correct judgment. This is a consideration, however, which, though it may disarm the severity of censure, and claim for such individuals the exercise of the utmost candour and charity, does in no degree alter the duty of the British parliament and the British public. If "the existence of slavery," as it now exists in our colonies, be, to use the forcible language of the *Edinburgh Reviewer*, "an atrocious crime," then "every Englishman who loves his country should dedicate his whole life, and every faculty of his soul, to efface this foul stain from its character," as speedily as is consistent with the safety and well-being of the parties more immediately concerned.

THE
NEGRO SLAVERY *of the* WEST INDIES.

THE main object of the preceding article is stated to have been, “by exhibiting a series of facts, to fix the value of certain general principles which apply to the condition of Negro slavery in all divisions of the civilized world; and to demonstrate that in its leading characteristics, and more prominent tendencies and effects, it is, *when uncontrolled by some powerful external influence* which shall make the emancipation of the slave the ultimate end of its regulations, the same revolting institution, whether it be administered by Spaniards or Portuguese, Frenchmen or Dutchmen, Englishmen or Americans.” This is also the main purpose of the present publication. In pursuing it, however, we are anxious to avoid the imputation of unfair dealing towards the holders of slaves in the British colonies. We might have brought forward, in abundance, proofs of the excessive rigour of the slave code in the colonies of the French and Dutch. We might have shewn, by an induction of particulars, resting on the best authority, with what terrible ferocity that code is often administered in practice; how it serves to divest the female character of its most amiable attributes, rendering not the masters only, but the mistresses of slaves, dead alike to the feelings of tenderness and delicacy; and how it converts even the most sacred functions of criminal justice into the means of indulging the worst passions of the human heart, and of gratifying a barbarous and san-

guinary thirst of vengeance. It might be said, however, that, in doing this, we were exciting unjust prejudices against our own West India planters; that our own colonial institutions bear in themselves a much milder aspect than those of the French and Dutch, and are besides administered by Englishmen, in the spirit, and according to the maxims, of English jurisprudence.

We will not now stop to controvert the correctness of this statement; we will give our countrymen the benefit of the plea, so far at least as to abstain, for the present, from illustrating our general position by facts drawn from the foreign colonies of the West Indies. The proofs already exhibited, in confirmation of it, have been drawn from the nature and effects of the slave system in the United States, the general spirit of whose legislation and jurisprudence is, to say no more, as liberal as our own; and we mean, in what follows, to confine the examination to the British islands.

Here again, we propose to take a view of the state of slavery, which must be admitted, by West Indians themselves, to be the least unfavourable to the character of their system. We shall not now have recourse to the writings of that able and faithful delineator of Negro slavery in our own islands, the Rev. James Ramsay, because the scenes he witnessed, however they may serve to mark the genius of that institution, it might be alleged, are now upwards of forty years old. Neither shall we have recourse to any part of the evidence taken before the Privy Council, or before Parliament, when the question of the Slave Trade was first agitated in this country. We shall not even cite, in support of our general views, the testimony of Dr. Pinckard; nor the recorded atrocities communicated by Lord Seaforth in 1803, as illustrative of the state of slavery in the oldest of our colonies, Barbadoes; lest it should be argued, that these authorities do not apply to the actually exist-

ing state of things. We shall abstain even from laying any stress on the still more recent exemplifications of the spirit and tendency of colonial slavery, which are furnished to us in the cases of Huggins of Nevis, Hodge of Tortola, and Rawlins of St. Kitts, lest we should be charged with too much confining our view to small and insulated communities, where individuals are less influenced by public opinion than in larger societies*. We recollect, indeed, to have heard West Indians, when these cases were alluded to in Parliament, challenge the opponents of the slave system to look, for a just appreciation of its character, not to our smaller islands, but to Jamaica, which exceeds them all in extent of population, and the liberal nature of whose institutions they did not hesitate to set up as a model for general imitation. We accept the challenge; and we propose, therefore, for the present, to confine our view to a consideration of the slave system as it exists in Jamaica, the colony in which we are told that it may be seen under the most favourable circumstances, and where we are also told that the slaves are under the protection of a humane code of laws, humanely and equitably administered.

In this delineation, also, of slavery, as it exists in Jamaica, we shall abstain from selecting particular instances of cruelty, and shall farther abstain from specifying such cases of general treatment, in the management of plantations, as might be deemed to be peculiarly harsh and rigorous. On the contrary, we shall select, for our most prominent example, the case of an estate, the owner of which is distinguished even in this country for gentlemanly and kindly feeling; and (which is perhaps of still more importance) is possessed of wealth

* Let it not be supposed, that we admit the validity of the objections to which, in the present instance, we think proper to defer. We may have other opportunities of shewing that they have no real force whatever.

which relieves him from the necessity, to which many by their circumstances are unhappily driven, of exacting from their slaves an undue portion of labour, or of denying them the requisite supplies for their sustentation and comfort. In short, the proprietor in question, it is well known, is himself an excellent master to his slaves, and does all in his power to render their situation comfortable. But he lives in this country, and is therefore obliged to trust to the agency of others; and in point of fact his best efforts appear to have been employed in vain to mitigate the intrinsic oppressiveness of the system.

The Rev. Thomas Cooper published, in the course of the last year, in a periodical work called the *Monthly Repository*, several papers, with his name affixed to them, on the subject of Negro Slavery in the West Indies. These papers attracted considerable notice, being evidently the production of an able, intelligent, and upright man; and naturally induced persons taking an interest in the question to communicate with him upon it. The following statement is the result of these communications; and it is now given to the public with the permission of Mr. Cooper himself, who, we are most happy to announce to our readers, is engaged in preparing for the press a more complete detail of his observations on Negro Slavery during his residence in the West Indies, as well as a fuller development of his views on the subject.

I. EVIDENCE OF THE REV. THOMAS COOPER.

In the year 1817, Robert Hibbert, Esq., of East Hide, near Luton, Bedfordshire, engaged the Rev. Thomas Cooper to go over to Jamaica, for the express purpose of ascertaining the practicability of improving, by means of religious instruction, the condition of the Negroes on his estate of Georgia, in the parish of

Hanover, in that island. With a view to render his task as agreeable as possible, Mr. Cooper was authorised to adopt his own plans of tuition, "provided they should in no respect be found incompatible with the order and management of the plantation." A house was provided for him, pleasantly situated about a mile from the Negro village, and he was made quite independent of the other White people connected with the slaves. He reached the estate on Christmas day, 1817, and continued upon it for upwards of three years, after which he returned to England, where he now resides.

The owner of this estate, who himself resides in England, is, as may be inferred from his proceedings in this very instance, a man of great benevolence. He was at the entire expense of Mr. Cooper's mission, and he seemed disposed to spare no outlay which he thought likely to contribute to the comfort of his slaves, of whom there were about 400 attached to the estate. The estate had formerly been made to produce 400 hogsheads of sugar; but Mr. Hibbert, considering that the labour required for the production of so large a quantity pressed too heavily upon his slaves, directed that only 300 hogsheads should be made, and it is to this moderated scale of employment, and to a gang of Negroes thus favourably circumstanced, in relation to their proprietor, that Mr. Cooper's information refers.

One great obstacle to his success as a religious instructor, which Mr. Cooper had to encounter at the very outset of his undertaking, was this, that the slaves had no time to attend upon him. This will require a somewhat lengthened explanation, which will serve, at the same time, to throw light incidentally on several material features of the slave system.

The season of crop, in other words, the sugar harvest, commenced about the time of Mr. Cooper's arrival in Jamaica, and continued for about five months. During

that period, the general plan is, and that plan was followed on Georgia estate, to begin the manufacture of sugar on Sunday evening, and to continue it generally, without intermission, either day or night, till about midnight of the following Saturday, when the work stops for about eighteen or twenty hours, to commence again on the Sunday evening *. In order to prevent any interruption of this process during the week, the slaves capable of labour, are, with some necessary exceptions, divided into two gangs or spells, which, besides being both fully occupied in the various occupations of the plantation during the day, are engaged the whole of the night, on alternate nights, in the business of sugar making †. Their labour, during crop time, is thus equal to six days and three nights in the week. And in the exaction of this labour, no distinction is made between men and women: both are subjected to the same unvarying rule.

The canes are carried on the backs of mules, or in carts, from the field to the mill. The men employed in this part of the work have no regular time of rest, either night or day. Their task is to keep the mill regularly supplied with canes, and it is only when they have been able, by exertion, to accumulate a quantity there, that they can venture to take rest. It seldom happens that they get a whole night's rest at one time. Besides the alternate night of rest allowed to the other slaves, that portion of them who were not attending the sugar works had half an hour allowed them to sit down in the field to eat their breakfast, and two hours further interval of labour allowed them in the middle of the day, generally from one to three. The same allowance

* By an act of the Jamaica legislature of Dec. 1816, it is forbidden to set the sugar mills to work before five on Monday morning. But this regulation appears to have been practically disregarded in this instance.

† On many estates the two gangs or spells, instead of alternating the whole of the night, labour half of each night, the one being replaced by the other at midnight.

of time for breakfast and dinner was continued to the labouring slaves the whole year round. *

During the five months of crop, therefore, it is pretty evident, that it would have been found "incompatible with the order and management of the plantation" to allot any portion of time for religious instruction, unless it were on Sunday.

But here it will be said, that Sunday was the very day on which that instruction might most conveniently and appropriately have been given; and that it could hardly be alleged, with any fairness, that the Negroes had no time to attend to religious instruction, when the middle of that day might have been set apart for the purpose. To this arrangement, however, Mr. Cooper found there were insuperable objections: it was wholly "incompatible with the order and management of the plantation." In the first place, the persons who had been toiling for six days and three nights in the preceding week, many of whom had continued that toil till past midnight on Saturday, could not be expected voluntarily to assemble, at a very early hour, to listen to lessons which they had not learned to appreciate. In the next place, Sunday was the *only* day which was allowed them, during the five months of crop, for cultivating their provision-grounds; for bringing thence the food requisite for their sustenance during the week; and for going to market.

It may not be generally understood, that not only is Sunday a market-day in Jamaica, but that, for the Negroes, whether as venders of the fruit or vegetables or poultry or other articles of food they may have to dispose of, or as purchasers of the little necessities or

* The law referred to above specifies these periods of half an hour and two hours as the proper intervals of labour during the day; and it adds that, except in crop time, the slaves are not to be obliged to work before five in the morning, or after seven in the evening.

comforts they may wish to buy in return, *Sunday is the only market-day.* Such, however, is the fact.

The distance of the place of market, varying from one to five, ten, and even more miles, and which must be twice traversed by such slaves as go to it, and who have generally heavy loads to carry thither, tends further, independently of the time required for their sales and purchases, to abridge the hours which could, by any possibility, be given to religious worship on the Sunday.

It is some labour even to fetch on that day from their provision-grounds the plantains, or yams, or eddoes, or other food which they may require, to feed themselves and any children they may have, during the succeeding week; a labour which is often aggravated by the distance of those provision-grounds from the homestall of the plantation; a distance often extending to six, and sometimes even to ten miles. The distance of the provision-grounds on Georgia estate was about three miles from the Negro village, which was thought moderate. Still the very walk thither and back was sufficient to diminish, by two hours, the brief respite from plantation-labour which Sunday afforded to the slaves.

But besides these different uses to which the Sunday was necessarily appropriated, there remained another of a still more engrossing nature. Sunday was *the only day which was allowed to the slaves, during crop, for cultivating and keeping in order their provision-grounds, from which provision-grounds they derived their sole means of subsistence*, if we except a weekly allowance of seven or eight herrings to each adult, and half that number to each child, and a small present of a pound or two of salt fish at Christmas. If, therefore, they neglected to employ in their provision-grounds a sufficient portion of the Sunday, to secure to them an adequate supply of food, they might be reduced to ab-

solute want; and although the want might be supplied, yet the neglect would not fail to be punished.

When all these circumstances are weighed, we shall have no difficulty in comprehending how it was that Mr. Cooper, during the first five or six months of his residence on Georgia estate, could find no time, for the religious instruction of the slaves, which was *compatible with its order and management*.

“ The Sunday shone no Sabbath-day to them.”

Nor was their case, in this respect, on Mr. Hibbert's estate, at all peculiar. It was the common lot of the plantation-slaves generally throughout the island.

Crop-time, however, lasted only for five, or, at most, six months of the year. How did Mr. Cooper succeed during the remaining six or seven months? During those months, as well as during crop-time, the Sunday was wholly and exclusively applied, in the case of the slaves, to the various secular objects already mentioned; but chiefly and above all, Sunday being the day especially appropriated for the cultivation of their provision-grounds, which were the allotted source of subsistence for themselves and their families while engaged in the weekly labours of the plantation, it was felt to be impossible to require that a portion of it should be given to attendance on religious instruction, at least unless an equivalent portion of time had been given them, during the week, for the purpose of cultivating their grounds. But, even then, to have enforced such attendance on the Sunday would have proved a grievous imposition. It would have operated as an interdict from attending market, on the only day on which there was any market to attend. Under these circumstances, even Mr. Cooper was forced to admit that it would have been the greatest cruelty to compel the slaves to attend Divine worship on Sundays.

But it may be asked whether no time, except Sunday, is given to the slaves for the raising of food. The law of the island requires that one day in a fortnight, except during the time of crop, should be allowed to the slaves, *exclusive of Sunday*, for cultivating their provision-grounds.* This would amount to from fourteen to sixteen days in the year. The proprietor of Georgia was, however, more liberal than the law. There the slaves were allowed for this purpose (and other proprietors in that quarter, Mr. Cooper thinks, may have been equally liberal,) every Saturday after crop, until they began to dig the land into holes for the fall-plant, when they are allowed only every second Saturday. By this arrangement, the Negroes belonging to Georgia had about twenty-eight days in the year allowed them for the cultivation of their grounds, besides Sundays.

As this time, however, had been given them for the express purpose of raising their food, it would have been unjust to the slaves, and would have placed both religion and its minister in an odious light, had any part of it been authoritatively diverted from its original destination, with a view to attendance upon him. Accordingly it was agreed that, out of crop, an afternoon every fortnight should be allowed for religious worship and instruction. Mr. Cooper had thus an opportunity of preaching to the slaves about eleven or twelve times in the year. But the moment crop began, there was an entire cessation for five or six months of all meetings of the kind.

After remaining in this unsatisfactory state for upwards of three years, Mr. Cooper, as has been already remarked, quitted Jamaica and returned to Great Britain. He justly observes, that it could perhaps hardly

* See the amended Slave Act of Jamaica, presented to the House of Commons, along with various other papers respecting the West Indies, on the 10th June, 1813.

be expected that he should have consented to consume his time amongst a people to whom he could preach only twelve times in the year.

Having thus made our readers in some measure acquainted with the respectable witness to whose testimony we mean in the first instance to refer them, we shall now proceed to adduce his further evidence, both as it respects the particular estate on which he resided, and the condition of the slaves generally in the island. When the statements are general, they are to be considered as comprehending Georgia, unless that estate be particularly excepted.

1. *State of Morals and Religion.*

This, Mr. Cooper states, is as bad as can well be imagined both among Whites and Blacks. With scarcely any exceptions, all of the former description, residing on plantations, live in a state of open and avowed concubinage with Black or Coloured women. The general profligacy, in this respect, is perfectly notorious and undisguised *; and one effect of it is, that the young women on estates, instead of becoming mothers of children, are at an early age made the mere instruments of licentious gratification. It is well known that the morals of nineteen out of twenty White men are ruined before they have been a month in the island. They get into habits of debauchery, and every idea of religion vanishes. Mr. Cooper does not recollect to have seen a single White man there, who shewed any serious concern about religion, excepting some Missionaries.

There is no regular marriage instituted amongst the slaves; indeed, the women will say they would not be

* So undisguised, indeed, is it, that, when visitors stay all night on an estate, they are accustomed, on going to bed, to desire the domestic who attends them to bring them a girl, with almost as little ceremony as they would ask for a candle.

such fools as consent to be confined to one man: their engagements, therefore, are merely temporary, and are not considered as at all binding. Mr. Cooper never heard of any attempt, by agreement between masters, to bring together on the same plantation a man and wife who lived on different plantations. Nor could it in general be of any very great use to do so, while there is no such thing among them as a marriage-tie.

It is, doubtless, in part owing to this cause, and to the universal profligacy of manners prevailing among Blacks and Whites, that the Negroes, in Jamaica, are a very unprolific race: not that they are so naturally, — but they are made so by the brutalizing and demoralizing system of government under which they live, which is notoriously most unfriendly to the production of life, and, in several ways, tends directly to its destruction. Among other things, it causes the women to be extremely careless of themselves when breeding, so that miscarriages are very common; and it produces also the most miserable neglect of their children.

The Negroes on Georgia estate do not keep up their numbers. There were in one year only seven births, though the whole population is about four hundred. Mr. Cooper attributes this non-increase to their morally degraded condition; to prostitution and its various consequences, including disease; to hard work, and to severity of punishment. Indeed, he considers that having no other motive to exertion in their present state, they would not work at all, were it not that neglect would be visited with severe punishment.

In Jamaica the slaves are scarcely ever taught to read.

In every parish there is a rector, who, generally speaking, preaches every Sunday morning at the parish church; and a curate, who has a chapel. The service, however, takes place at the very time which may be

called high-change at the Negro market. Mr. Cooper, when he attended church, may have seen twenty or thirty Negroes there, (whether slaves or free he could not say,) and probably about a dozen Whites. The greater part of the congregation consisted of free Mulattoes. The regular church-service was read, and a sermon preached, which, however, was not at all adapted to the Blacks. It is required by law that there should be service in the afternoon, after market should be over, to suit the time of Negroes,—when all who might attend should be catechised : but this had not been done in the parish of Hanover ; and he believes not in the adjoining parishes, excepting for a short time at first. It may have dropped in consequence of the non-attendance of the Negroes.

To obviate the complaint that had been made in England of the want of Christian instruction for the slaves, an act was passed instituting a curacy in each parish, expressly for their benefit. The act states that the curates shall appropriate two days in every week to go to some one or other of the estates in rotation, and there to perform the duties of his office, and to instruct all slaves willing to be instructed, *provided the consent of the person in possession of the estate be first obtained.* In consequence of the necessity of obtaining this consent, Mr. Cooper was informed, by the curate of Hanover parish, that he might apply to ten estates before he got leave to preach on one. These applications had a reference only to week-days; for it would have been obviously the greatest cruelty to compel the attendance of the slaves at worship on Sunday. Both the rector and curate of Hanover parish said (and the same was true of the adjoining parishes) that they were of no use to the slaves as instructors, and that, under existing circumstances, it was impossible they should. And as for the curate's act, it was generally held there to have been

passed for the satisfaction of England, and not for any good it was likely to produce.

The character given by Mr. Cooper of the slaves is such as might be expected to be formed by a state of oppression and degradation such as theirs, and in the total absence of all intellectual, or moral and religious culture. He represents them as addicted to thieving; but he adds, that to this vice, in some cases, they are strongly tempted, by the unreasonable conduct of the planters themselves. These generally refuse to sell any of their sugar in the island; the consequence is, that those who are not sugar-planters can procure it only in a concealed and smuggled way, in the Negro market, where it is all stolen sugar. Mr. Cooper, who refused to buy any such, was obliged to tell the attorney of Georgia, that if he would not allow him to have some sugar on the estate, he must send to London for it.

The following passage we give entire. It is taken from a letter of Mr. Cooper's in the *Monthly Repository* of 1822, p. 494.

“ Liberty seems evidently to be the natural right of every human being. Why not then admit of their being prepared for the enjoyment of privileges which cannot be held from them without acting contrary to the sacred laws of truth and justice? The planters, however, are not the only persons with whom I would remonstrate upon this subject; for all who indulge in the consumption of West India produce, or contribute in any way to the maintenance of the present order of things in our sugar-islands, ought in common fairness to bear their share of the blame. With what propriety can a consumer of *rum* or *sugar* cast a stone at the *cultivator* of the sweet cane. The Negro is the injured individual; he is robbed of his liberty, and with that of every thing that can render a rational existence desirable. He is denied all the advantages of education, condemned to

the vilest ignorance, lest, by becoming informed, he should discover, and seek to remove the cause of all his unmerited misfortunes. He cannot marry, and is thereby not merely tempted, but, in a manner, compelled to form the loosest and most disgusting connections. I would appeal to the common discernment and feelings of mankind, whether marriage can exist where a *third* person has it in his power to step in and disannul the holy league. Now, every one knows that this is virtually the case with respect to the slaves in the West Indies. The connections which they form do not always take place between individuals belonging to the same proprietor: in numerous instances they are the property of different masters. But it is no uncommon thing for the inhabitants of one plantation or settlement, to be removed to another, situated perhaps on the opposite side of the island; and consequently, in all such cases, husbands, wives, and children, belonging to other gangs, are, contrary no doubt to the wishes of the respective masters, left behind. Others again are seized, and sold to pay the debts of their owners. These evils might be removed by attaching them to the soil, but then others would remain of a nature almost equally formidable. Every slave being compelled, under pain of corporal punishment, to yield implicit obedience to the will of the master, the wife, as well as the husband, would be under the necessity of joining a gang under the command of a driver, and, in case of not giving him satisfaction, to submit to the most degrading chastisement administered in the most indecent manner. I have known them point to things of this description, for the purpose of shewing that it is impossible for them to marry. Over their children it is obvious that they could have no authority resembling that which parents in a free country possess: they could only leave them the same wretched inheritance which they received from their ancestors.

Hence, those who have children are generally careless in respect to the habits they form, and the lives they lead. They know they can never sink lower in the scale of society than they already find themselves placed, and they have no hope of rising. A regular line of orderly conduct may save them from the lash, but it can effect no radical change in their condition. The highest office to which they can ever aspire is that of a driver, — an office which no one, not destitute of every manly and generous feeling, could wish to hold. In short, they have nothing to gain and nothing to lose; they have no character at stake: a good name, which, Solomon says, ‘is rather to be chosen than great riches,’ is of no avail to them. Their worth is estimated by the strength of their bodies, and the talent and disposition to perform their master’s work. The greatest villain, therefore, in a moral respect, may be, and sometimes is, the most valuable slave; the natural consequence of all which is, that the Negroes, as a people, are as destitute of correct morality as they are of liberty. Chastity is utterly out of the question amongst the whole tribe, and both men and women are found to vindicate, as innocent, practices which it is scarcely allowable to name amongst Christians. This is followed by low cunning and contempt of truth, a determined resolution to thieve, and the greatest aversion to every species of labour. Gratitude, affection, fidelity, activity, and courage, make no part of the character of the West India slave; and yet thousands and tens of thousands have been ‘received into the congregation of Christ’s flock, and signed with the sign of the cross,’ &c. &c. I have been present, more than once, at the christening of two or three hundred of them, and repeatedly conversed with persons who have been *thus* regenerated. Need I add that the whole is a solemn mockery of what the people are exhorted to regard as a Christian rite? No effort what-

ever that I could ever learn is made to prepare them for the ceremony, or, after it is performed, to enforce its design. The poor creatures get a new name, with which they are mightily pleased, and some of them are said to fancy themselves out of the reach of Obeat, or witchcraft. Within the last few years, it is true, curates have been sent out for the avowed purpose of instructing them in religion; but, it is to be feared, they meet with no adequate success. The Negroes cannot attend on their service on a Sunday; and when I left Jamaica, no regulations had been made, or, I believe, thought of, for allowing them time in the week. These Missionaries are expected to visit several estates every week, for the purpose of preaching to the slaves, if they can obtain leave of the proprietor, or person acting in his place, to do so. But this they very seldom get: on some estates not at all, on others once or twice in the year; so that their presence in the island can be of little importance. I have heard it, indeed, repeatedly declared that the Curate's Act was intended for England, not for Jamaica; and this really appears to me to be viewing the subject in its true light; for it must have been known, before it was passed, that the planters would not allow the slaves any opportunity for attending on their new instructors, and that, consequently, such a law could have no tendency to improve their condition. In a thousand instances the clergy are rather to be pitied than blamed; and I have not the least doubt that many a curate most deeply laments that ever he crossed the Atlantic."

In a subsequent letter Mr. Cooper observes, that if a man would but "fix on his mind a clear picture of *a master treading on his slave with the feet of despotism*, he would perceive the cruel mockery of the same individual pretending, while in such an attitude, to raise his wretched victim with the hand of mercy." There is, he affirms, among slave-holders generally, "the

strongest prejudice to any thing which is in any way calculated to open the minds of their people." — "Ignorance, gross ignorance," is conceived to be "the grand prop of Negro slavery." Nay, he believes it to be the common opinion in Jamaica, "that the Negroes are an inferior species."

2. *General Treatment.*

The gangs always work before the whip, which is a very weighty and powerful instrument. The driver has it always in his hand, and drives the Negroes, men and women, without distinction, as he would drive horses or cattle in a team. Mr. Cooper does not say that he is always using the whip, but it is known to be always present, and ready to be applied to the back or shoulders of any who flag at their work, or lag behind in the line.* The driver, who is generally a Black man, has the power not only of thus stimulating the slaves under him to exertion, by the application of the whip to their bodies, while they are proceeding with their work, but, when he considers any of them to have committed a fault deserving of a more serious notice, he has the power also of prostrating them (women as well as men) on the ground, causing them to be held firmly down, by other Negroes, who grasp the hands and legs of their prostrate companion, when he may inflict upon the bare posteriors such a number of lashes as he may deem the fault to have merited; the whole number which he may inflict at one time, without the presence of the overseer, being, by the Slave Act of 1816, limited to ten. One of the faults which the driver most frequently punishes in this way, is that of coming too late to the field, either in the

* In one of his printed letters, in which he is replying to an objection, Mr. Cooper incidentally, but very significantly remarks, that "to a Jamaica man" it would be "truly astonishing" to learn that the whip was not needed, or that its sound was rarely heard.

morning or after dinner. Those who arrive after the fixed time are pretty sure to get a few, perhaps, five or six lashes. Mr. Cooper, on one occasion, saw three or four old women come too late: they knew they were to be whipped, and as soon as they came up, threw themselves down on the ground to receive the lashes: some of them received four, others six lashes. These minor punishments, Mr. Cooper says, are very frequent. He believes that seldom a day passes without some occurring; and he has heard of as many as sixty Negroes being flogged in one morning, for being late.

More serious punishments are only inflicted by the authority of the overseer; and the mode of their infliction is usually the same as has been already described. Whether the offender be male or female, precisely the same course is pursued. The posteriors are made bare, and the offender is extended prone on the ground, the hands and feet being firmly held and extended by other slaves; when the driver, with his long and heavy whip, inflicts, under the eye of the overseer, the number of lashes which he may order; each lash, when the skin is tender and not rendered callous by repeated punishments, making an incision on the buttocks, and thirty or forty such lashes leaving them in a dreadfully lacerated and bleeding state. Even those that have become the most callous cannot long resist the force of this terrible instrument, when applied by a skilful hand, but become also raw and bloody; indeed, no strength of skin can withstand its reiterated application.

These punishments are inflicted by the overseer, whenever he thinks them to have been deserved. He has no written rules to guide his conduct, nor are the occasions at all defined on which he may exercise the power of punishment. Its exercise is regulated wholly and solely by his own discretion. An act of neglect or of disobedience, or even a look or a word supposed to

imply insolence, no less than desertion or theft or contumacy, may be thus punished; and they may be thus punished, without trial and without appeal, at the mere pleasure and fiat of the overseer. Doubtless, any slave may, *after having been punished*, complain of his overseer to the attorney of the estate, or to a magistrate; but such complaint often does him more harm than good.

The law professes to limit the number of lashes which shall be given at one time to thirty-nine; but neither this law, nor any other which professes to protect the slave, can be of much practical benefit to him: it cannot, under existing circumstances, be enforced; and its existence in the statute-book, therefore, is but a mockery. A Negro, especially one who is the slave of an absentee proprietor, may be considered as entirely in the power of the overseer, who is his absolute master, and may be at the same instant his lawgiver, accuser, and judge; and may not only award sentence, but order its execution. And supposing him to act unjustly, or even cruelly, he has it in his power to prevent any redress from the law. The evidence of a thousand slaves would avail nothing to his conviction; and, even if there were any disposition in the inferior Whites to inform or to bear testimony against him, he has only to take care that the infliction does not take place in their presence.

In point of fact, Mr. Cooper believes that the limitation of the number of lashes to thirty-nine is practically disregarded, whenever the overseer thinks the offence deserving of a larger measure of punishment. The information he received on this subject all went to shew that the law was not attended to. One overseer told him, that a woman had disobeyed his orders, and he put her in the stocks by way of punishment. She complained to the attorney of this proceeding. He ordered her to be thrown down on the ground, in the customary manner, and thirty-nine lashes were inflicted

on her naked posteriors ; after which she was raised up, and immediately thrown down again, and received thirty-nine lashes more, applied in the same manner.

The law permits the Negroes to make their complaints to magistrates. In one case several Negroes went to complain to a magistrate of their want of houses, or proper accommodation. Mr. Cooper saw them, on that occasion, at the magistrate's door. The magistrate, however, told him it would never do to interfere in such matters, for, if they did, there would be no getting on between masters or overseers and magistrates; and, with respect to these complainants, what he did was to desire them to return home and trust to their master's kindness : and Mr. Cooper thought that, all things considered, he could not well have done otherwise.

Two women, who were pregnant, desired to quit the field during rain, on account of their pregnancy. The overseer refused them permission. They went to complain of this refusal to a magistrate, but were stopped in their way by a neighbouring overseer, and by him thrown into the stocks until he sent them back to their own overseer, who put them again into the stocks on their own estate, and had them flogged. Of this proceeding they complained to the attorney. The attorney was of opinion that the overseer had acted with undue severity ; but he considered the women to have been highly to blame for attempting to complain to the magistrate ; whereas, he said, they ought in the first instance to have complained to him.

It is common for Negroes, who have been guilty of what is deemed a serious offence, to be worked all day in the field, and during the intervals of labour, as well as during the whole night, to be confined, with their feet fast in the stocks. In the case of one Negro, who was so confined for some weeks, Mrs. Cooper

begged hard to obtain a remission of his punishment, but did not succeed. Another Negro, belonging to the estate, was a notorious runaway. Being taken, he was flogged in the usual manner, as severely as he well could bear, and then made to work in the field. During the interval of dinner-time he was regularly placed in the stocks, and in them also he was confined the whole night. When the lacerations, produced by the flogging he had received, were sufficiently healed, he was flogged a second time. While the sores were still unhealed, one of the book-keepers told Mr. Cooper that maggots had bred in the lacerated flesh. Mr. Cooper mentioned the circumstance to the attorney, who did not manifest any surprize on hearing it.

An old African Negro, well known to Mr. Cooper, who appeared to possess a sound and superior mind, and was reckoned the best watchman on the estate, was placed to watch the provision-grounds for the use of the overseer's house. These were robbed, and the robbery being imputed to his neglect, he received a very severe flogging. The old man declared (Mr. Cooper does not vouch for the truth of the excuse) that he could not help what had happened, the grounds being too extensive for him to guard them effectually, so that while he was on one side of them, the Negroes could easily steal on the other. This flogging made a great alteration in the old man, and he never seemed well after it. In two or three weeks another robbery occurring, he received a still more severe flogging than before. One morning, while Mr. and Mrs. Cooper were at breakfast, they heard a groaning, and going to the window, saw this poor man passing along in a state which made Mrs. Cooper shrink back with horror. Mr. Cooper went out to him, and found his posteriors, which were completely exposed, much lacerated, and bleeding dreadfully. He seemed much exhausted. He

attempted to explain the case, but was incapable from fatigue and suffering. A Negro boy was standing by; the old man pointed to him, and said, "Massa, him tell you." The poor old man from this time was never well or cheerful, and he soon afterwards died.

Mr. Cooper never saw a Negro, who, when uncovered, did not exhibit marks of violence, that is to say, traces of the whip, on his body.

It has been already mentioned that the Negroes on this estate, and the same is the case generally throughout the island, have no food beyond a small allowance of salted fish, except what they raise on their own grounds; Sundays, and a certain number of days beside, being allotted for their cultivation.

The Negroes have in general too few houses; but the having a house to themselves, be it ever so bad, gives some feeling of importance. On Georgia there are many houses built in rather a superior style, which have cost the proprietor a heavy sum of money; but in general their huts are like sheds. They are made with posts put into the ground. The sides are wattled, some being plastered with mortar, and some not. They are thatched, sometimes shingled. They often have one room to sit in, with one or two for sleeping. They lie on boards, or on a door covered with a mat of their own making, and sometimes a blanket for covering; but they have not all blankets. A woman with children has a blanket, and also the aged men; but many men have none.

3. *Emancipation.*

If the mother be three degrees removed from the Black, her child by a White man is free, and classes, in point of privilege, with Whites.

White men occasionally give freedom to their mistresses and their children. But this, in all cases where

the mistress and her children are not the slaves of the White man, must be effected by purchase, and, of course, with the owner's consent. But such purchases cannot be effected when the estate is mortgaged, or the owner is a minor. White men often complain that the owner is not compelled to give freedom to their children, on his being paid their value. In all cases where slaves are made free, a bond must be given that they shall not become chargeable.

Free Blacks and persons of Colour pay all taxes, and perform military duty in the colonial militia, precisely as the Whites. According to the number of Negroes which each planter possesses, he is obliged to have upon his estate a certain number of White persons, or to pay a certain sum for each deficiency. This is with a view to prevent the militia from falling off in numbers. Free people of Colour, though they are bound to serve in the militia, yet are of no avail in freeing any estate, on which they may be employed, from this penalty. Indeed, from the prejudice existing against them in the minds of the Whites, it is in very few cases that they are employed on estates, which, considering the perfect competency of many of them, they feel to be a great hardship. So far indeed are they from being encouraged in Jamaica, that their increase is viewed with apprehension, as adding to the danger of insurrection. Much jealousy is entertained of them, especially when they have been educated in England, where they have been treated as men, and on a footing of equality with their White brethren. And yet Mr. Cooper is of opinion, and in that opinion we entirely concur, that "the principle of gradual emancipation," though the subject of so much alarm to West Indians, affords the best means of remedying the evils of the system, with safety to the master and the slave.

It is a strong proof of the degrading light in which free persons of Colour are viewed by the Whites, that these last never introduce even their own children into company. It was thought a very extraordinary thing, on one occasion, to see a father riding in a gig with his own Coloured daughter. Coloured persons reputed to be the children of the owners of the estates are sometimes held as slaves upon them, and have been even sold along with them.

Many of the free Negroes are industrious, and succeed very well, although they never think of hiring themselves to the planters to work in the field. It could not indeed be expected that they should submit to the degradation of working under the lash. They are objects of great respect to the slaves, but are kept at a distance by the free Browns, who consider themselves as rising in rank as they approach to the colour of Whites.

Very great difficulty is experienced by Negroes in obtaining their freedom, even when they are able to pay for it, because those who, by their industry and frugality have realized the means of purchasing their freedom, and who, therefore, are most worthy of it, and also likely to employ it most beneficially, are the most valuable hands. Mr. Cooper knew three valuable men who wished to purchase their freedom. They had long applied in vain to the agents of the proprietor resident on the spot. They at length, however, obtained their end, by an application to the proprietor himself, then in England. After this a fourth made many efforts to obtain his freedom by purchase, but they proved unavailing; and he sunk in consequence into a state of despondency, and became of comparatively little value.

The number of Brown slaves, the children of White men, is very considerable. In general, however, they are not employed in the field: Mr. Cooper knew only one estate on which Brown slaves were so employed, viz.

Roundhill, in Hanover. They are usually employed as domestics, or taught mechanic arts, as carpenters, coopers, masons, smiths, &c.

4. *Miscellaneous Observations.*

A large proportion of all the estates are mortgaged; and estates are frequently sold to pay off the debts upon them. The slaves themselves, too, or a part of them, are often seized for the payment of the master's debts; and this is done without any reference, in a multitude of cases, to family-connections. It is felt by them as a grievous hardship to be separated from their connections: it sometimes produces a species of rebellion; and has been known to occasion the death of many, through the distress of mind which it produces.

Small proprietors often undertake to do work on estates by job, which they employ their slaves to execute. When they are thus sent to different places, they carry their own provisions with them, and usually sleep on the ground under a tent, all huddled together, though sometimes they are accommodated in the sugar-works of the estate, or by the Negroes of the estate in their houses.

Task-work is very uncommon in Jamaica. It is held to be dangerous to allow the slave much spare time.

If a Negro is deemed to be incorrigible by plantation-discipline, he is often sent to the workhouse of the parish, where he is chained to another Negro, and employed, with others chained in the same manner, two and two, in repairing the roads during the day, being shut up during the night. This punishment is inflicted without the intervention of any magistrate, by the mere desire of the master or overseer, who may protract it for any length of time.

When Negroes are sent out in pursuit of runaways, they are usually armed with a cutlass, and are authorized, in case of resistance, to chop, that is, to cut down the runaway. The Maroons are also encouraged by rewards to take up runaways. They carry fire-arms, and may shoot them if they resist.

There is on every estate what the Negroes call a Hothouse or Hospital, which a medical practitioner is expected to visit once or twice a week. The Negroes have generally a great dislike to being shut up in this Hothouse, where they are separated from the kindness of their friends, and would prefer being in their own houses, even though in a miserable state.

White women, who are owners of slaves, will, in general, without any scruple, order their slaves to be flogged, and some of them will even stand by to see them stripped bare, and punished in the usual disgusting manner.

Just before Mr Cooper quitted the island, as he was walking in the streets of Lucea, the port-town of Hanover parish, in company with the captain of the vessel in which he had taken his passage, they saw an old man who appeared to have been recently flogged. He was standing in the public street with his posteriors exposed and bleeding, and yet he seemed to excite no attention whatever from any one but Mr. Cooper and the captain.

Such is the unbiassed testimony of this respectable Christian minister on the subject of Negro slavery, as it exists at the present time in our island of Jamaica. The statements he has made do not consist of instances of cruelty collected in a long series of years, or from different parts of the island, but they refer to one neighbourhood, and mostly to one estate; and that estate, too, not singled out for the harshness or inhumanity of its

treatment, but such an estate as would be as likely as any other to have been selected in order to convey the most favourable representation of Negro bondage ; being an estate the owner of which is conspicuous for his benevolence, and seems sincerely desirous of sparing no expense to make his slaves as comfortable as circumstances will allow. Do not these facts, therefore, furnish a strong presumption, we will not say against the owners of slaves, but against the system which they administer, as incurably vicious, unless the British parliament shall interfere to apply a remedy adequate to the occasion, by paving the way for a gradual emancipation, and in the mean time by abating the evils which will otherwise be found to be inseparable from that degrading and disgusting state of society, which exists in our West India islands?

The valuable statements of Mr. Cooper appear to us to possess this great recommendation, that they are given, (as may be more clearly seen by a perusal of his papers in the Monthly Repository,) with an admirable dispassionateness, and without the slightest feeling of irritation towards the planters, whether proprietors or overseers. On the contrary, with a candour that does him the highest honour, he becomes, in some respects, their apologist, attributing the evils which he specifies and deploras, mainly to the system they are called to administer, rather than to any particular disposition, on their part, to administer it oppressively, or to abuse the tremendous power they possess. He conceives them to be forced, by circumstances, “to continue to whip on their unwilling gangs, as a post-boy does his hacks from mile to mile.” What an idea does this single sentence convey, of the nature of Negro slavery !

But, after all that can be said in favour of the slaveholders is admitted, we would ask, is it possible to expect that such power as theirs should not be abused ? Or that

the men who possess it, and who are stated to have cast off the fear of God, and to experience little or no controul from human laws, should not be tyrannical, capricious, and cruel? To suppose this, would be to suppose the planters of Jamaica to be angels and not men.

II. EVIDENCE OF JOHN WILLIAMSON, M. D.

In the year 1817 Dr. Williamson published a work, in two volumes, 8vo., entitled, “ Medical and Miscellaneous Observations relative to the West India Islands*, by John Williamson, M. D. Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, formerly Surgeon of the Caithness Highlanders, and late of Spanish Town, Jamaica.” He dedicates this work to the Earl of Harewood, on whose estate of Williamsfield, in the parish of St. Thomas in the Vale, Jamaica, he had lived for about four years in a professional capacity.† His residence in the island appears to have extended from August, 1798, to April, 1812, a period of nearly fourteen years.

The testimony of Dr. Williamson will be less liable to exception, in the estimation of West Indians, as he shows himself, on all occasions, a sturdy advocate of their system; and when he finds fault with them, it is manifestly with extreme reluctance. He even hopes, by an exhibition of facts, to place in their true light the unfair representations of the enemies of the colonies, “ the officious would-be friends” (as he calls them) “ of humanity,” who, he assures us, have only to “ leave the Negroes to their own judgment, and to improvement by the wisely framed resolutions of their own colonial assem-

* See an able review of this work in the *Edinburgh Review*, vol. xxviii. p. 340.

† On this estate Dr. Williamson states, that every thing was conducted on principles of liberality highly honourable to His Lordship. He resided there free of expence, and every comfort was afforded him he could have wished for. Vol. i. p. 76.

blies," in order to their being "a happy people," who will "fully appreciate the value of their superior condition." Vol. i. p. 338. — He sometimes expresses himself in terms almost approaching to rapture, when speaking of the condition of the Negroes in the West Indies; nay, he even doubts whether the abolition of the Slave-trade was not a great evil, inasmuch as it prevented the removal of Africans from a state of barbarism and misery, in their own land, to that state of civilisation and improvement, a West Indian plantation! (Vol. i. p. 371. ii. p. 332, &c. &c.)

One of the blessings attending this removal he rather amusingly discovers to be, that "indolent, good-for-nothing Negroes," (and it seems there are many of these in Jamaica,) who, "if they were left to their own free wills, uncontrolled by *wholesome laws*, which encourage industrious habits, would become idlers and plunderers, and return to barbarism," (vol. i. p. 345.) here find the control of *such wholesome laws*. In other words, their indolence finds a cure, and their industry an incentive, *in the wholesome discipline of the cart-whip*. In short, whenever Dr. W. speaks in *general* terms, he seems at a loss to find words strong enough in which to eulogise the humanity and tenderness of West India proprietors and overseers. But let us come to particulars, in order to see how far his facts tend to contradict or to corroborate his panegyric; and, that this may be better understood, we shall range our extracts from his work under the same general heads which we adopted in the case of Mr. Cooper's information.

1. *State of Morals and Religion.*

"The manner in which Sunday is spent," observes Dr. W., "will appear extraordinary, and very contradictory to the duties inculcated on that day. A great market is kept by the Negroes, which is, in truth, also a

market for the Whites. The merchants attend at their stores and counting-houses." (Vol. i. p. 42.)

"The sacred observance of Sunday appears to me," he says, "necessary, if we expect any good effect from the commands of God. In countries where the duties of that day are becomingly attended to, a greater proportion of virtue, &c. is to be observed. On the contrary, where the Sabbath is violated, the manners of the mass of the people are vicious, regardless of every commendable principle, and afford examples of human depravity which, it is with reluctance I must say, is too applicable to that country (Jamaica). It is much to be wished, that the fourth commandment were more fully taken into consideration. It seems *possible* to do away *Sunday markets*, and *cultivating the ground*. *Sugar-mills should not be at work on that day*, indeed, no labour allowed. It was appointed, by Divine authority, to be a day of rest and devotion, in which no work should be performed." (Vol. i. p. 108.)

"It must be admitted," he goes on to remark, "that the means of religious instruction to Negroes, in Jamaica, are yet extremely defective; and, it is still more painful to add, that the White inhabitants are culpably inattentive to public religious duties. It were well if that were all. *Contempt for religion is openly avowed by a great proportion of those to be met with in that country.*" (Vol. i. p. 328.)

"The propriety of matrimony," he tells us, "is seldom impressed on the minds of the Negroes, by the clergy or any other White persons. Indeed, the latter, themselves, shew the example of a libidinous course of life, and follow that promiscuous intercourse which can scarcely be justified in savages." (Vol. i. p. 329.)

"At our parish-church, the people of Colour behaved themselves with the greatest propriety, but the White persons conducted themselves with great indecency." —

“It is impossible, however, to do any thing,” (in the way of religious improvement,) “unless a becoming observance of the Sabbath is enforced. At present, it is a day of *labour, marketing, and exchange*, and too often is concluded by *scenes of excess and brutal debauchery. That system is authorized by the Whites.* But until done away, and that, as an introduction to Christian habits among the Negroes, nothing can be so futile as to attempt to reconcile Christianity with a violation of one of its most important commandments.” (Vol. i. p. 331.)

“Such a state of things among a people arrogating to themselves the designation of Christians,” he adds, “is of a nature so criminal, that to that we may ascribe the destructive line of conduct followed by the Negroes, affecting their lives and health, and the ultimate interests of those who are the cause of these evils.”—“No circumstance is, in my opinion, so adverse to the prevalence of Christianity among Negroes as the conduct of the White inhabitants, who treat the Sabbath with a violation of its most sacred duties, and make it, by the *established customs of the island*, a day of *marketing, labour, dancing, and excesses of every kind.*” (Vol. ii. p. 285.)

Sunday, Dr. W. conceives, is the only day on which instruction can be conveniently given. But “on that day the Negroes,” he tells us, “are engaged in *marketing and labour*. They are thus taught to disobey the command which enjoins the observance of the Sabbath; and it is impossible to suppose that a consistent impression can be made on the minds of Negroes, where the slightest sagacity on their part must expose the absurdity. While the legislature of Jamaica does not provide that Sunday shall be a day of rest, and enforce attention to it, I cannot persuade myself to believe their sincerity.” (Vol. ii. p. 287.)

Let us hear Dr. Williamson's testimony respecting another class of evils : — " A stranger is much surprised to observe the domestic attachments which many of the most respectable of the White inhabitants form with females of Colour." — " Among the Negroes, licentious appetites are promiscuously gratified ; and the truth requires that it should not be concealed, the Whites on estates follow the same habits, on many occasions, to a greater extent Black or Brown mistresses are considered necessary appendages to every establishment : even a young bookkeeper, coming from Europe, is generally instructed to provide himself ; and however repugnant may seem the idea at first, his scruples are overcome, and he conforms to general custom." (Vol. i. pp. 42. 49.)

Dr. Williamson, after enumerating a variety of causes of disease to which the circumstances of the Negroes expose them, adds, " Feelings of humanity and interest concur to deplore that condition of moral turpitude which has proved the source of so many evils to that devoted country." — " That unrestrained habit of promiscuous intercourse, which almost universally prevails in Jamaica, is, in itself, an insuperable bar to population." — " Negro women, in that unrestrained and corrupt line of conduct they are apt to pursue, on arriving at puberty, contract habits inimical to all decency, and particularly adverse to all probability of increasing numbers on the estate." He then proposes a plan for placing them under discreet superintendence, until married to persons of their own colour ; and adds, somewhat obscurely, but with a dreadful significancy, " Such a course would preclude that barbarous and violent line of conduct adopted on such occasions." * (Vol. ii. pp. 131. 199.)

* This sentence furnishes one of the many instances which occur in Dr. Williamson's book, of reluctant admissions, or dark intimations of evils, the combined result of profligacy and hard-heartedness, (lust and

From these, and similar causes, "The diseases of pregnancy," Dr. W. thinks, "are aggravated in Negro women. Abortion is so frequent as to lead to an opinion, that means are taken to procure it, *on account of ill disposition * to their masters, and other barbarous reasons, for which there can be no excuse.*" — "Unless means are adopted to bring the women to civilized habits, it will undoubtedly follow that every year will discover a prodigious decrease in our Negro population." (Vol. ii. pp. 199, 200.)

"An *unlucky*" (what a singular epithet to employ on the occasion!) "an unlucky habit of debasement has established itself, by long custom on estates, of book-keepers attaching themselves to mistresses, slaves on the estate," &c. (Vol. ii. p. 252.)

But enough of this.

2. General Treatment.

"An imperfect, confused manner is adopted in Jamaica," Dr. Williamson informs us, "for providing suitably for sick Negroes in the Hothouse, or Hospital."

"The *utmost*" he can say in their favour is, "that in *extreme cases*, where *danger* is represented, the most humane attentions are in general rendered, and nothing wanting which can conduce to comfort or recovery." — Chronic diseases, and lues, he says, are little attended to; and though it would be for the interest of the pro-

cruelty) in persons armed with power, which, however intelligible they may be to his West Indian friends, can convey no very clear ideas to persons used only to the decencies and restraints of European society.

* One perceives, in such expressions as these, the influence of colonial society, even on a mind so humane and considerate as Dr. Williamson's. Thus, on another occasion, he tells us that the wretched slaves, who commit suicide, do so from being ill disposed to their masters. (Vol. i. p. 93.)

prietors, and of humanity, if they were attended to, yet
 “ any attempts at innovation are resisted.”

“ If the practitioner were earnestly disposed to insist on his prescriptions and other instructions being obeyed, he would find his best efforts ineffectual; and it would be better, on the whole, by cultivating friendship with the overseer, to promote that object.” In short, he confesses that “ the nature of medical practice was unsatisfactory on estates and plantations.” He complains of overseers dismissing patients from the Hospital, in opposition to the advice of the medical attendant; thus accounting for the many instances of irrecoverable venereal cases. The liberal and humane intentions of proprietors *, he further complains, are not carried into effect. He has had often to lament that his own well-considered prescriptions to subdue a chronic disease, and to restore an additional healthy labourer to his employer, were *completely frustrated* by the negligence of overseers.” Dr. Williamson, in another place, specifies an instance where, in attempting the cure of a chronic complaint, which was proceeding favourably, “ the unfortunate man was turned out to work by the overseer; and, though he might labour for a while, would most probably become a victim to incurable disease.” (Vol. i. pp. 55. 63. 65. 185.)

“ The Yawy Negroes,” he further observes, “ on estates, seemed to me to be in a very neglected state. In the progress of disease, *that maintenance was not afforded them* which, with a view to cure, should be liberally dispensed. A disease, itself injurious to the constitution, is thus aggravated; whereas, if nature were supported by *fit diet, clothing, cleanliness, and com-*

* It was while residing on the estate of the Earl of Harewood that Dr. Williamson penned these remarks; and though the remarks themselves are strong, yet how much more strong are the implications which they convey!

fortable housing, she would work her own cure in most cases. An immense deal of labour is thus lost to the proprietor. But this is not all; for, owing to patched-up cures, there is a premature disappearance of the Yawy eruption, and the disease lies lurking in the system; bone-aches attack the unfortunate Negro; the master loses a valuable servant; and the servant drags on a miserable existence."—"The legislature has not interfered in this important matter." (Vol. i. p. 88.)

"The great mortality among infants, the first two weeks after birth," ought, he says, to have secured "the notice of all engaged in plantation-interests, from the proprietor downwards." In St. Thomas in the Vale, "the loss of infants was great beyond what could be imagined." On enquiry, *the bad management* accounted to him for the *mortality*. (Vol. i. p. 130.)

"At Newhall estate, where the Negroes were indulged, and considered of dissipated habits, a great deal of bad health occurred."

"The hospitals on estates are much in want of hot and cold baths, which might be erected at a moderate expense. A plan had been given in some time before for that purpose; and the liberal proprietor of Newhall had directed his overseer to have it done: but his orders were not obeyed." (P. 155.)

"It is painful for me to remark," observes the Doctor, on another occasion, "that on an estate, a valuable Negro was prevented, by the commands of an overseer, from availing himself of medical prescriptions, while labouring under a pulmonic complaint. My opinion was given to the overseer, with a prescription. Several weeks after, the Negro met me. An increased illness was expressed by his general appearance, and he declared he had neither received medicine nor indulgence, as I had directed. The consequences were, in a short time, fatal to a decent Negro, whose overseer could not

deny him to have been a dutiful servant, and respectable in his station.*

On another estate, "a woman, for a trivial offence, was confined in the stocks, in a cold room, night and day, and her life endangered by neglect." Again, "A pregnant woman was confined to the stocks for misconduct, and only liberated a few days before her delivery. Her health had suffered severely, and, after bringing a child, she discovered symptoms of puerperal fever, which terminated her existence in a few days." (Vol. i. p. 191.)

Negroes are represented by Dr. Williamson as "very liable to affections of the mind, which produce diseases of various kinds." Among these Dr. Williamson reckons the *mal d'estomac*, or dirt-eating, which, "when it has once established itself among a gang of Negroes, we cannot possibly calculate on the extent of its ravages. It has been observed, however," he adds, "that *on estates where the Negroes are extremely comfortable, this disease is seldom, if ever, discovered.*" (Vol. ii. p. 261.)

The professional pursuits of Dr. Williamson have, naturally enough, led his thoughts chiefly to the *medical* treatment of the Negroes. It is to this point that his observations are principally directed. Still, much incidentally breaks out, which throws light on the prevailing spirit and tendency of the colonial system, as it affects the well-being of the slaves. Some of the following extracts, however, from Dr. Williamson's work, have a more general bearing: —

"The overseer of an estate indulged a disposition to amorous connection with a handsome Negro woman, the adopted wife of a Negro cooper, with whom she

* He speaks of another case of a female, where he promised himself success in the treatment: but he says, "the overseer wanted labour; and in these circumstances we must not attempt to thwart the overseer." (Vol. i. p. 249.)

had lived as such for some time. She was the mother of children to her husband, and they lived together in a comfortable way. The woman declared herself unwilling to indulge the overseer in a wish so injurious to her husband's happiness; but, *his orders were to be obeyed*, and she yielded to his desires; and he aggravated the act by insisting that she should altogether live with him. It is painful to me to be obliged to add, that the woman's husband became the object of his resentment. He was annoyed for having expressed discontent at such an invasion of his happiness. His life became a burden; and though his wife was the companion of the overseer's bed, plots for his destruction were contemplated by the woman and her injured husband." Arsenic was mixed in lemonade for the overseer. He perceived the metallic taste, and did not drink of it; but a book-keeper took a draught of it, which produced uneasy sensations; but a brisk emetic being administered, prevented fatal consequences. After an enquiry, "it was pretty clearly ascertained, that the Negro woman, seduced from her husband, had mixed the dose," hoping that the overseer would have been "the just object of vengeance, by forfeiting his life." (Vol. i. p. 374.)

Dr. Williamson proceeds no farther with the story. He does not inform us what became either of the Negroes or of the overseer. It was due to the character of the country to have stated this. In a subsequent part of his work, (vol. ii. p. 201.) he again briefly adverts to the occurrence, but without attempting to satisfy our curiosity as to the fate of the parties concerned. He founds on it indeed a salutary monition to Whites, against pursuing the gratification of their licentious appetites, by the exercise of authority; and states it as his opinion that nothing operates more injuriously on the comfort of the Negro women than such cruel invasions of their domestic enjoyments. (Vol. ii. p. 201.)

Dr. Williamson remarks, “that where corporal punishment is least exercised, that property is always under the best management.” And he recommends that, in all cases of punishment, “the Negro’s name, his crime, the extent of punishment and of confinement, should be regularly entered in a book, and that no overseer, or person under his authority, should inflict any punishment which should not thus be brought within notice, or punish a Negro in any shape, but in the presence of a White man belonging to the estate* whose name must be entered in the book; the whole to be sworn to by the overseer.” (Vol. i. p. 193.)

He afterwards recurs to this subject, and is so impressed with the injurious nature of the punishments which it is in the power of overseers to inflict, that he recommends that they should take place, “*if possible*, in the presence of the plantation-doctor, who should be empowered to limit the extent of punishment.” (Vol. ii. p. 219.)

We shall make only one extract more under this head.

“An abuse,” observes our author, “at present existing on some properties, is arming the drivers with power to inflict punishment in the field.” — “When punishment is inflicted by flogging, the limit should not be extended above 39 lashes, which the overseer is only empowered to inflict by law. It cannot, however, be denied that this limit is often out-done, and by repeatedly punishing offenders the parts become insensible to the *lacerations which tear up the skin*. When that barbarous consequence is arrived at, the infliction of the lash becomes a matter of indifference to the unfortunate

* This recommendation is obviously intended by Dr. Williamson to supply some remedy for that principle of colonial law, which excludes the evidence of slaves from being received, in cases affecting persons of free condition.

Negro, and new sources of torture must be found out by which the commission of crime may be checked. It can scarcely be necessary to add, that such a condition of torpor in the parts to which punishment is applied can never be justified on any pretext; and I blush to reflect that White men should be the directors of such disgraceful deeds. Opinions have been given that it would be well altogether to do away the possession of a *large heavy whip* from the driver's hands; and whether we consider the *frightful sound which reaches our ears every minute in passing through estates*, by the crack of the lash; or the power with which drivers are provided to exercise punishment; it would be desirable that such a weapon of *arbitrary and unjust authority* were taken from them. It is at present customary to crack the whip to turn out the gangs, at stated hours, to the field. When a Negro seems to be tardy at his work the driver sounds the lash near him, or *lets him feel it as he thinks proper*.* From all this the "*impression made upon the passenger, who is probably a stranger, is horrible indeed*."— "Every consideration of humanity and policy points out that the *frequent infliction of the heavy whip to cut up and lacerate severely*" is improper. "*That extreme punishment* †, if awarded, should be only

* Speaking of the driving system, Dr. Williamson observes, in his own obscure way, that "however much it may be the wish of proprietors and attorneys of estates to condemn every step which tends to bear down the Negro incapable of the usual labour of the healthy, it is too true that due consideration is not sometimes given to this point. The interests of proprietors are thus sacrificed to a barbarous policy. On estates this fault is not so common as in jobbing-gangs; but in both the crime is equally culpable, and inimical to their true policy." (Vol. ii. p. 223.)

Now the plain English of this passage we take to be, that on sugar-estates, but still more in jobbing-gangs, the weaker part of the gang are sometimes over-driven, by the impulse of the lash, in order to keep up with the stronger.

† What Dr. Williamson justly calls *extreme punishment* it is nevertheless in the power of every overseer to inflict summarily, at his own discretion, for any fault or for no fault at all.

admitted on occasions of very aggravated crime; and it would be well, even under these circumstances, not to inflict it on the single opinion of any individual."

"By abandoning the severity of punishment, unless in cases of very aggravated transgression, the condition of the Negroes will be *immensely* improved. A Negro, subjected to frequent and severe punishment, has an appearance and manner by which he is easily known. *If, in a warm day, we pass by a gang when they are uncovered behind, it is a reproach to every White man to observe in them the recently lacerated sores, or the deep furrows which, though healed up, leave the marks of cruel punishment.* If the management of Negroes can be conducted without such unperishing testimonials of *uncalled-for cruelty*, let not future crimes disgrace us, and let our future humanity towards them compensate for the past." (Vol. ii. pp. 222. 225.)

3. *Miscellaneous Observations.*

General remarks are rare in the work of Dr. Williamson, nine-tenths of it being devoted to medical facts and comments; but such as we have been able to glean, we shall now give.

"The constitution of this island," the Doctor tells us, "in its political establishment, renders it necessary to keep up distinctions in society, *which exclude all persons of Colour from admission into that of Whites.* This exception at first appears extraordinary; but some consideration will point out its necessity." Dr. W. does not, however, inform us of the process by which he arrived at this conclusion, nor does he explain why distinctions in society should attach to colour exclusively.

After speaking of a certain gang of Negroes, who had been purchased at the Marshal's sales, and who, having been seized and sold for payment of their master's debts, had, of course, been forcibly separated from their

connections in different parts of the island, he states that medical care was lavished on them in vain. "Depression of mind spread among them." — "They candidly confessed that death was their wish." He then goes on to observe as follows: "Negroes anticipate that they will, upon death removing them from *that* country, be restored to their native land, and enjoy their friends' society in a future state. *The ill-disposed to their masters* will sometimes be guilty of suicide, or, by a resolute determination, resort to dirt-eating, and thus produce disease, and, at length, death. It is often necessary to check that spirit; and as Negroes imagine that, if decapitation be inflicted after death, the transition to their native country cannot follow, a *humane principle* leads the proprietor to have the head of such a Negro placed in some prominent situation; and this has been found a salutary mode of deterring the rest from conduct so destructive." (Vol. i. p. 98.)

The Marshal's sales spoken of above, Dr. W. informs us, take place at Spanish Town, which is the seat of the courts of justice for the county of Middlesex; and he speaks of the practice, though conformable to the existing laws, as being the hardest and the most irreconcilable to a feeling mind that can be conceived. He then indulges in we know not what day-dreams of the early abolition of this power of seizing a Negro, with as little ceremony as an ox or a cask of sugar, and selling him to pay his owner's debts. Six years have since elapsed, and *the practice still exists, in every British slave-colony, in all its horror.*

Dr. Williamson speculates, with equal good nature, on the happy effects which the humanity of colonists and of colonial legislatures will infallibly derive from that, in his view, very questionable measure of policy, the abolition of the Slave-trade; and, we fear, with something of a like result. "Those who had the barbarity" (it

seems there were such) “to count on supplies of slaves from Africa, at the expense of the Negroes already in their possession, *working THEM severely, clothing and feeding THEM imperfectly*, will now find it their policy to take good care of Negroes for selfish reasons. For some time after I went to Jamaica, *it was customary, on a few properties,*” (he does not say on what proportion of those he was acquainted with,) “*not to encourage the rearing of children*, on account of the loss of labour incurred by the mother’s confinement, and the time afterwards required in rearing the infant.” But now “proprietors and attorneys,” (he says nothing of the overseers of non-resident proprietors, by far the most numerous class, and who exercise a more decided influence on the happiness and increase of the Negro population than any other,) but now “proprietors and attorneys will increase their exertions to protect Negroes. On every property inducements will be held out to encourage the propagation of children, which would be materially promoted by introducing marriage among them.” (Vol. i. p. 372.)

This grand and indispensable mean, however, of encouraging population, has not yet been introduced by these proprietors and attorneys, on whose enlightened humanity Dr. Williamson is disposed to place so generous and unbounded a reliance: his warning was given five or six years ago, and has hitherto produced no effect.

III. EVIDENCE OF MR. J——— M———.

J. M. is the son of a respectable tradesman in London, who, wishing to do something for himself, went out, about the beginning of the last year, 1822, to the island of Jamaica, to be a book-keeper on Bushy Park estate, in the parish of St. Dorothy’s; a large estate, belonging to a wealthy and liberal proprietor, and which has the reputation of being managed as well

or rather better than usual.* He had no complaint whatever to make against the owner, attorney, or overseer for any harsh or unkind treatment of himself; but the state of things he found there was so grating to his feelings, that he could not have remained, even though his health had been quite unaffected, which, however, was not the case; and after a few weeks' residence on the estate, he resolved to return to England, in which he met with no opposition. His statement is as follows:

“The slaves on the estate were constantly attended by drivers with cart or cattle whips, which they were in the habit of using as here carmen use their whips on horses; and occasionally one or more slaves were ordered out of the line of work, laid prostrate on the ground, and received a few lashes (from two or three to ten) on their posteriors, for no other offence that he could perceive or ever heard of but that of being indolent, or lagging at their work, or being late. He saw a few working with iron-collars round their necks, connected with each other by a chain; a punishment which, he understood, was usually inflicted for running away, and continued sometimes for several weeks. The huts of the slaves were very indifferent, and almost destitute of furniture. On Sunday they either attended market, or worked in their own grounds; but none went, or were expected to go, to any church or place of worship; nor did he ever see or hear of any instruction, religious or otherwise, being bestowed upon them. Many of the slaves had women living with them as their wives; but as for marriage being used, either as a means of civilization or for any other purpose, he never even heard the word mentioned as it respected them. He understood that the White servants were not allowed to take those women who so lived with particular men; but as

* New Hall Estate, (see p. 78.) also belongs to him.

for any others, they not only chose and took such as pleased them, but they were expected to do it as a matter of course. Accordingly, he was invited by the overseer to follow the general practice, the very first day he arrived on the estate. In a spare house, kept for the occasional use of persons coming thither for a few days, were women whom he understood to be at the service of whoever came to occupy the apartments, and two of them were spoken of as the children of a former proprietor.

“ But little provisions appeared to him to be given to the slaves. Herrings and such fish, rather as sauce than as food, were given them. But they had grounds allotted them, and the Sunday, throughout the year, for their cultivation, with every or every other Saturday out of crop-time (the practice on this head differing); and while strong and in good health, this he thought might do very well. But in crop-time (on some estates nearly half the year) they could have very little leisure or inclination to work for themselves, being often greatly fatigued by extra night-work and watching. He understood that, by the law of Jamaica, only thirty-nine lashes could be given at once, but he was told, on the spot, that an overseer could easily, when so disposed, evade it.”

The agreement of the three witnesses who have been produced, in all material points, must appear remarkable, especially when it is remembered that they resided on different parts, widely removed from each other, of the same island. Mr. Cooper resided on the north side of the island, the last cited witness on the south side, and Dr. Williamson, while engaged in plantation-duty, nearly in the centre of it. But we have a fourth witness to bring forward.

IV. EVIDENCE OF THE ROYAL GAZETTE OF JAMAICA.

In the month of January, 1816, there appeared in a periodical work (the same which afterwards contained the review of Hall and Fearon, inserted above,) an article entitled “ Review of the Reasons for establishing a Registry of Slaves.” In that article there occurred the following statement, viz.: —

“ It is among the many opprobrious peculiarities of the West India system, that it has created a legal presumption in favour of slavery ; so that every person in the islands, who does not boast a pure European descent, is, in all judicial proceedings, assumed to be a slave, until he can prove himself to be a freeman.

“ When the importations of African Negroes into our colonies commenced, and for some years after that period, it was, doubtless, the fact, that a Black complexion was the certain indication of a servile condition. It was then probably true, without one exception, that every African who was found in a British settlement had been previously reduced by violence to a state of bondage. The West Indies possess a written and an unwritten law. Their statute-book contains the former : usage, of an origin comparatively modern, is the sole foundation of the colonial *lex nonscripta*. English lawyers would, we apprehend, vehemently dispute the validity of this whole body of traditionary West Indian law ; but difficulties of this kind are not much regarded in the supreme courts of Jamaica or Barbadoes. Relying on customs which have had their birth far within the date of legal memory, it is the doctrine of those tribunals, that the offspring of a female slave necessarily inherit the terrible condition of their mother. In the earlier times of our colonial history, it was, after this principle had been once established, probably true, that Mulattoes as well as Negroes, were really in a state of slavery.

The mixture of European with African blood could not vary their condition, for that they derived *ex parte maternâ*, and a White mother of Mulatto children was probably never seen in the West Indian islands. If, therefore, manumissions had never been introduced into our colonies, or if free Blacks had never migrated thither from Great Britain, or other countries, or if a time had never arrived when the importation of the natives of Africa was declared illegal, it would have been strictly true, that a Negro and his remotest posterity were necessarily slaves, and the legal presumption of the servile condition of such persons would have been fairly supported by the real state of the case.

“ But the emancipations by purchase, by grant, and by will, have been in use from a time little posterior to the origin of the Slave-trade; and though during the last nine years it is the admitted fact that large numbers of African Negroes have been liberated in our colonies by the operation of the abolition-laws, yet, strange to say, the courts of justice of every one of the islands continue to act on this cruel legal presumption, with as little attention to the case of manumitted and free Negroes, as if such a class of society had not existed. As the law at present stands, if a White person asserts a right to hold his fellow-creature in perpetual slavery, the burden of proof lies, not on the asserted owner, but on the alleged bondsman. He is required, at the peril of the most severe personal affliction to which men can be subjected in this world, to prove a negative; to show that he is *not* a slave. In making this proof, he is, by another most iniquitous principle of law, excluded from producing as evidence in his favour the testimony of any of that class of society, the Black or Coloured slave-population, to whom alone his right to freedom, and the grounds of it may often be known. In Barbadoes, and till the last two years in Jamaica also, he was even

unable to summon, as witnesses, the few persons of his own complexion with whom alone he can ever associate, and on his descent from whom his title to liberty frequently depends. If manumitted in the colonies, the loss of the deed of enfranchisement would destroy the only evidence by which his claim could be substantiated. Or should he be among the number of those recently imported from Africa, and restored by the Abolition-act to freedom, his ignorance of the language of the country, to which he has been removed, would of itself prevent his asserting his right to that inestimable blessing; nay, even if he were born in this happy island, and had the unhappiness to visit our West Indian colonies, he would be liable to be seized as a runaway, and sold into perpetual bondage, for want of a deed of manumission, which, under the circumstances of his birth, he could never have possessed.

“ Such is the law, and such also is the daily practice of *British* colonies. It is not merely the individual European claimant, but the state itself, the crown of Great Britain, as represented by the executive government of its colonies, which continually holds the miserable descendants of Africa to this dreadful probation. Let any man take in his hands a file of Jamaica newspapers, one will scarcely be found without numerous advertisements to the following effect: ‘Whereas —, a man of Colour, *who asserts himself to be free*, has been committed to the public gaol of —; notice is hereby given, that unless within — days the said — *shall satisfactorily prove his title to freedom*, or shall be claimed by his lawful owner, he will, at the expiration of that time, *be sold for the benefit of the public*.’ This we assert to be the exact substance of advertisements which frequently appear in the West Indian Gazettes; and any man who will take the trouble of looking into them, may satisfy himself of the fact. Nor is this shameless public insult

on national justice unsanctioned by law. There is not an island in which this course of proceeding is not expressly authorized, in the case of persons taken up and committed on suspicion of being runaway slaves; persons, that is to say, who are found in any of the colonies without a master, and without the *legal* proofs of their freedom.

“ Nor let it be imagined that such cases are merely supposititious or of unfrequent occurrence. The Royal Gazette of Jamaica itself, — the island whose pretensions to the character of justice and mercy, in its legislative acts, are sounded so loudly in our ears, — need only to be opened, in order to furnish numerous cases of the most aggravated description. We have now before us the file of that paper for 1815; and we will give a specimen or two of the evidence which it furnishes. On the 20th May, 1815, we find the following specification of persons confined in the common gaols of the island as runaways: —

“ George Thomas, an American; says he is free, but has no document thereof.

“ Samuel Menderson, a Portuguese Creole (no mark, &c.); says he is free, but has no document thereof.

“ Joseph, a native of St. Domingo (no brand-mark, &c.); says he is free: to be detained until he proves his freedom.

“ William Kelly, a Creole; says he is free: to be detained until his freedom is proved.

“ John Francis; says he is a native of Curaçoa, and that he is free, but can shew no document thereof. There are marks of flogging on his back, which, he says, he got on board the Hebe frigate.

“ Thomas Hall; says he is free.

“ Antonio Belfour, a Sambo; says he is an American, and that he is free.

“ David Barrow, a Sambo; says he was born at Barbadoes, and that he is free.

“ Alexander Antonio ; says he is a Spaniard, and that he is free.

“ John Rose, an American Sambo, a sailor ; says he is free.

“ Antonio Morales, a Creole, of the island of St. Thomas ; says he is free, but has no document thereof. Came here as carpenter of the schooner Sparrow.

“ In the very last paper which arrived from Jamaica, that of the 18th November, 1815, we find the following insertions in the gaol-lists, viz. :—

“ John Dixon, a Creole ; says he is free, but has no document thereof.

“ John Messar ; says he is free, but has no document thereof.

“ Edward Brian Wardins, a Mulatto Creole ; says he is free, but has no other document than a pass, signed John Wardins, who says that he is his son, and was born free.

“ William Bennett, a Creole ; says he is free, but has no document thereof.

“ The Gazette of each week exhibits similar, and not less numerous, instances.

“ Here let it be recollected, that all the individuals in the above list (and these form, probably, not a tithe of the cases of precisely the same nature which have appeared in the Royal Gazette of Jamaica, during the last year alone) allege that they are free. There is no contrary allegation ; they are not claimed by any one as slaves. And yet because they cannot produce documentary evidence of their freedom, (a species of evidence which, perhaps, they never could have possessed, or may have lost,) they are, after a certain time, by the fiat of the Jamaica legislature, to be sold to the best bidder, precisely as strayed horses or mules who have been impounded, but not claimed, would be sold ; and the proceeds of this sale, (the price of blood !) after defraying

the gaol-expenses, are to be paid into the treasury of the island. Is it possible for an Englishman to contemplate such a state of things as this without horror? and are we not bound, in the sight of God and man, to provide an adequate remedy?"

One would naturally have imagined that so cruel and oppressive a system as this could hardly have been exposed to the view of the British parliament and public without leading to enquiry, at least, if not to some measures of a remedial nature. Seven years, however, have elapsed since the above exposition of this great and crying evil, and no step whatever has been taken to abate it. Charity might suggest that this otherwise unaccountable omission may have arisen from ignorance or inadvertence. West Indians, in this country especially, may not have been aware of the true state of the case, and they may never have seen the article from which the above extract has been taken. There is, however, the most decisive proof to the contrary. On the 19th June, 1816, Mr. Palmer, himself a Jamaica planter, and a leading and influential person among the West Indians, quoted largely from this very article, in a speech of great length and ability which he made in the House of Commons, on an occasion to which we shall hereafter find it necessary to advert. The article was therefore well known to him. But although the very address to the King which Mr. Palmer then moved, in his preface to which he particularly referred to this article, prayed His Majesty "to carry into effect every measure tending to promote the moral and religious improvement, as well as the comfort and happiness of the Negroes," it is the fact that the evil in question remains to this day without any effectual redress. To this very day every Black or Coloured person in the British West Indies is assumed to be a slave, unless he can adduce *legal* proof of his being free.

The evidence of the existence of this principle, not merely in some statute which it might be alleged was obsolete and inoperative, but in active and constant operation, was then drawn from the Royal Gazette of Jamaica. From the same respectable and authentic source we derive the proof, that, up to this day, the same principle continues still to be maintained in law, and acted upon in practice.

From the Royal Gazette of September, 1822, we extract the following notices of persons taken up, and confined as runaways, viz.: —

“ In St. Andrew’s work-house, Robertson, a Mandingo; *says he is a discharged soldier, of the second West India regiment, and that he is free.*”

“ In St. James’s work-house, Joseph Lee, a Creole; *no apparent brand-mark** : says he is free, but has no document thereof.”

“ In Spanish Town work-house, Edward Quin, a native of Montserrat, elderly; no mark : says he is free, but no document.”

“ In Clarendon work-house, Harry, a Creole; formerly belonged to Mr. George, who died before the Maroon war (1797); has had no owner since : grey-headed.”

But what proof is there that these persons were actually sold? We can adduce no evidence on this point. These persons may, for aught we know, have been able, before the period of their imprisonment expired, to establish their freedom by *legal* proof. But if they were unable to do this, it would only have been following the course prescribed by the law, to sell them, by public auction, as slaves. Of this fact the very numbers of the Gazette which have supplied the above ex-

* Slaves are commonly marked with the owner’s name, like sheep or cattle. The operation is performed with a heated brand.

tracts, furnish evidence. We observe in it the following advertisement : —

“ *Westmorland Work-house, Aug. 27. 1822.*

“ Notice is hereby given, that unless the under-mentioned *slave* is taken out of this work-house prior to the 22d October next, he will on that day, between the hours of ten and twelve in the forenoon, be put up to public sale, and sold to the best bidder, agreeably to the work-house law now in force, for payment of his fees : viz. John Williams, five feet nine inches and a half high, *no brand-mark* ; says he is a Maroon of Charles-Town, whereof John March, Esq. is superintendant, but which is *supposed to be false*, as he is apparently a foreigner by his speech. He had for some time been seen skulking near Glasgow estate, in this parish.”

The following names and descriptions are appended to similar advertisements, viz. : —

“ Kingston work-house. — Mary Johnson, an aged Creole ; *no brand-mark* : says she belonged to William Johnson, a Maroon, who has been dead eight years ; since which she has maintained herself.”

“ Spanish-Town work-house. — Joe, a French Creole ; *no brand* : very black : says he belongs to his father and mother in St. Mary’s.”

“ Clarendon work-house. — Robert, an Eboe, elderly ; belonged to Mr. Macbean, who died some time ago ; has no owner at present.”

Now, is it possible to conceive a more tremendous instrument of oppression than the power which the laws of the West Indies convey, to every man in the community, of thus treating, as slaves and criminals, all whose countenance indicates that they are of African descent,

or that they have African blood in their veins; of imprisoning them as runaways, and of having them afterwards sold into a perpetual bondage, where they, and in the case of women their offspring too, may wear out their wretched lives under the cattle-whip? As those who take up runaways, and commit them to a work-house, are entitled to a reward for this service, it is obvious that there exists a strong temptation to abuse this power. Any needy ruffian, to whom a few dollars are an object, may first rob a poor wretch of his document of freedom, and then commit him as a runaway. Besides, what a fearful tenure it is by which to hold that precious possession of personal liberty, that if the certificate of it, which a man ought to have in his possession, shall have been lost by accident, or consumed by fire, or stolen or destroyed by the various insects which abound in tropical climates, he shall be exposed to this appalling risk. But how many free Black and Coloured persons may reside in our islands, or be led to visit them, who may be in this predicament; or who may be ignorant of the requisitions of this cruel law; or who may never have had the means of establishing their freedom by documentary evidence? They may have been born and liberally educated in England. They may have migrated thither from one or other of the numerous provinces of North or of South America. They may have been liberated under the Abolition-acts. They may have served in the navy or army of Great Britain, and may have bled in fighting her battles. But if they have either never had such a document of freedom as West Indians have pronounced *legal*; or, having had it, have lost it, they are liable to undergo the merciless and relentless operation of the *work-house law*: and after having laboured for some months, in chains and under the lash, for the benefit of the public, they may then be put up to auction and sold into irremediable bondage, the proceeds to be

applied first to the *payment of their fees*, and when that end is answered, (*proh pudor !*) to replenishing His Majesty's treasury !!! — Comments would only weaken the effect which the bare statement of such facts is calculated to produce. *

HAVING now detailed the evidence which it was our design to exhibit, in illustration of the more prominent features of Negro slavery, as it actually exists at the present day in our own colonies, and particularly in Jamaica, we shall not exhaust the patience of our readers, nor weaken the effect of the preceding statements, by any lengthened observations of our own. We beg, however, to be permitted to subjoin a few brief remarks.

During upwards of thirty years we have heard many boasts made, both in pamphlets and in parliamentary speeches, of the improvements that have taken place in the condition of the Negro slave; and we were led to indulge a hope, that assertions so confidently made, and so constantly repeated, must have had some foundation on which to rest. On looking narrowly, however, into

* It might be thought disingenuous not to notice in this place the assertion of the Jamaica Assembly, that persons thus taken up as runaways are allowed to establish their liberty by the process called *homine replegiando*, a provision to that effect having been introduced into their last consolidated slave-act. But it may be sufficient to remark, that this process still leaves upon the alleged slave the burden of proving his freedom. To those who wish to examine this question more fully in all its legal bearings, we would particularly recommend a pamphlet, published by Butterworth, in 1816, and entitled “ A Defence of the Bill for the Registration of Slaves, by James Stephen, Esq., in Letters to William Wilberforce, Esq. ; Letter the Second.” The whole subject will be there found fully and most luminously discussed at p. 25—73. The discussion is particularly deserving of the attention of professional gentlemen.

the facts of the case, we have met with nothing to sustain that hope. We have not been able to discover any *substantial* amelioration in the *nature* of the slavery of the present day, when compared with that, which, from the evidence adduced before the Privy Council and Parliament in the years 1788—1791, we learn to have then prevailed. The slavery of both periods appears to us to be identically the same state of existence.

We do not mean to deny that many individual planters, as Mr. Hibbert and others, may have been induced, by the discussions which have taken place, and by their own benevolent feelings, to act a more liberal and indulgent part towards their slaves than formerly. Neither do we mean to affirm that the influence of public opinion, excited by the public agitation of the subject, has had no effect in restraining the abuses of power. What we mean to affirm is, that during the sixteen years which have followed the abolition of the Slave-trade; nay, during the thirty-five years which have elapsed since the condition of Negro slavery has become a topic of controversy in this country, that unhappy state of being has undergone no real or substantial improvement whatever — no improvement, that is to say, which does not depend, we may say wholly, on the dispositions and conduct of the proprietor or of his delegated agent, for the time being.

We admit that various colonial acts have been framed, professing to improve the condition of the slave; but they have been generally inefficient to their professed object, whatever other purpose they may have served. Of the Curate's Act of Jamaica, for example, Mr. Cooper informs us, that he had heard it repeatedly declared, that it was "intended for England and not for Jamaica;" for, he adds, "*it must have been known* before it was passed, that, under the peculiar circumstances existing there, *such a law could have no tendency to improve the condition*

of the slaves." So, with regard to the Register Act of the same island, it is impossible to read it without perceiving that it is wholly inoperative to the ends for which chiefly a registration of slaves was proposed. *

It is true, also, that the leaders of the West India body in Parliament have stood forward, at different times, as the advocates of measures of amelioration.

In 1797, Mr. Charles Ellis moved an address to His Majesty, praying him to call on the different colonial legislatures to adopt such measures as should "appear to them best calculated to obviate the causes which have hitherto impeded the natural increase of the Negroes already in the islands, gradually to diminish the necessity of the Slave-trade, and ultimately to lead to its complete termination; and particularly with a view to the same effect, to employ such means as may conduce to *the moral and religious improvement* of the Negroes, and secure to them throughout all the British West India islands *the certain, immediate, and active protection of the law.*"

All the West Indians then in Parliament supported this motion; and although they were considered by the abolitionists as wrong in expecting any effective measures of reform from the colonial legislatures, yet they had at least credit given them for good intentions. It afterwards, however, came out, somewhat awkwardly, that one of the chief movers in this business had held a different language in his confidential correspondence with the local authorities, from what he held in Parliament. There the West Indians professed to make the amelioration of the condition of the slaves and the abolition of the Slave-trade their ultimate objects. In the correspondence, however, which was evidently not intended

* See "A Review of the Colonial Slave Registration Acts," printed for Hatchard, in 1820.

to see the light, an effort was made to conciliate the acquiescence of the colonists, by assuring them that the main object of the motion was (not what it professed, to terminate the Slave-trade, and improve the condition of the slaves, but), as it was expressed by Sir William Young, in a circular letter, addressed to influential persons in the West Indies, “ *to stop for the present, and gradually to supersede the very pretensions at a future period, to a measure of direct abolition by the mother-country,*—a measure which would blast the root of all our settlements of property; change the foundation of every bequest, loan, and security; turn every mortgage into an annuity on the lives of the Negroes; institute a general system of foreclosure; and, depreciating our estates, preclude all immediate resources, and ruin every interest.”

Nor were the resolutions of the Committee of the West Indian body in London, which accompanied the above letter, less explicit. They state, that “ unless some plan of regulation shall be brought forward” by the colonies themselves, “ many persons of weight and character,” seeing no alternative proposed which is “ at all compatible with their ideas of humanity,” “ will feel themselves under the necessity” of supporting the measures of Mr. Wilberforce. “ That, *consequently*, for the joint purposes of *opposing the plan of Mr. Wilberforce*, and *establishing the character of the West India body*, it is *essential* that they should manifest their willingness to promote actively the cause of humanity, by such steps as shall be consistent with safety to the property of individuals, and the general interests of the colonies.” (See House of Commons’ papers, ordered to be printed, 8th June, 1804, marked H. Leeward Islands, No. 119.)

The West India Committee, or rather their organ, Sir W. Young, having neglected in express terms to enjoin secrecy on their correspondents abroad, these confi-

dential communications were recorded, by the legislatures of St. Vincent's and of the Leeward Islands, as the basis of their proceedings, and as such they made their appearance unexpectedly on the table of the House of Commons.

In consequence of this correspondence, some, but not all, of the colonial legislatures were induced so far to yield a decent compliance with the royal requisition, as to pass what they called meliorating acts. These, however, have generally, we may say universally, proved a dead letter. The governor of Dominica, General Prevost, when called upon by the Secretary of State, Earl Camden, in his circular letter of the 4th of October, 1804, to specify what had been their effect in that island, replied, that "from the many years I have passed in the West Indies, and as a resident in most of the colonies, I may venture to represent to Your Lordship the legislature of Dominica as distinguished by the laws it has *passed*, for the encouragement, protection, and government of slaves; but, I am sorry I cannot add, that *they are as religiously observed* as you could wish." — As for "the act of the legislature, 'An Act for the Encouragement, Protection, and better Government of Slaves,' it appears to have been considered, from the day it was passed, until this hour, as a political measure *to avert the interference of the mother-country in the management of slaves*. Having said this, Your Lordship will not be surprised to learn that the seventh clause* of that bill has been wholly neglected."

In other cases the avowal of the motives was not so explicit, but in all the return was NIL.†

* A clause requiring certain returns to be made for the declared purpose "of securing, as far as possible, the good treatment of the slaves."

† See papers ordered to be printed by the House of Commons, 25th February, 1805.

In June, 1816, Mr. Palmer, an eminent planter of Jamaica, moved in the House of Commons, as chairman of the West India body, another address to the Crown, praying, among other things, that His Majesty would be graciously pleased “to recommend, in the strongest manner, to the local authorities in the respective colonies, to carry into effect every measure which may tend to promote the moral and religious improvement as well as the comfort and happiness of the Negroes.” One effect of this motion was to frustrate Mr. Wilberforce’s bill for the Registration of Slaves; in other words, “to avert the interference of the mother-country in the management of slaves.” But there, we fear, its effect has terminated: at least, we are not aware that, during nearly seven years which have now elapsed since this address was moved, the condition of the Negro slave has undergone any substantial amelioration in any of our colonies; and with respect to the largest of them, Jamaica, the evidence we have now adduced seems to establish the contrary conclusion. But that we may not be accused of adopting this conclusion on insufficient grounds, we shall specify some particulars, of vital importance to the well-being of the Negro race, in which there is manifestly no real improvement.

1. *The Negroes in Jamaica are still driven at their work by the impulse of the cart-whip, as cattle or horses are driven in this country.* — This fact is undeniable. But let us only consider for one moment all the depressing and brutalizing effects of such a system, — a system which shuts out the Negro from even the pretence to a higher motive for exertion than the fear of the lash, and which extracts labour from him, not in the measure which his strength affords, or his interest prompts, but in the measure which an overseer or a driver may choose to draw from him by the impending terror or the actual infliction of corporal punishment; — let us only

consider this one feature of colonial bondage, and we shall at once see enough to account for more than half of its multiplied evils.*

* The following description of the driving system has been given by one who was long an eye-witness of its practical operation. It is contained in a pamphlet, published by Hatchard, in 1802, intitled "The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies." (P. 8—13.)

"That West India Slaves, whether French or English, are the property of their master, and transferable by him, like his inanimate effects; that in general he is absolute arbiter of the extent and the mode of their labour, and of the quantity of subsistence to be given in return for it; and that they are disciplined and punished at his discretion, direct privation of life or member excepted: these are prominent features, and sufficiently known of the state of slavery. Nor is the manner in which the labour of the slaves is conducted a matter of less publicity. Every man who has heard any thing of West Indian affairs, is acquainted with the term *Negro-drivers*, and knows, or may know, that the slaves, in their ordinary field-labours, are *driven* to their work, in the strict sense of the term 'driven' as used in Europe: though this statement no more involves an intimation, that, in practice, the lash is incessantly, or with any needless frequency, applied to their back, than the phrase 'to drive a team of horses' imports, that the waggoner is continually smacking his whip.

"But a nearer and more particular view of this leading characteristic may be necessary to those who have never seen a gang of Negroes at their work.

"When employed in the labour of the field, as, for example, in *holeing a cane-piece*, that is, turning up the ground with hoes into parallel trenches, for the reception of the cane plants, the slaves of both sexes, from twenty, perhaps, to fourscore in number, are drawn out in a line like troops on a parade, each with a hoe in his hand; and close to them, in the rear, is stationed a driver, or several drivers, in number duly proportioned to that of the gang. Each of these drivers, who are always the most active and vigorous Negroes on the estate, has in his hand, or round his neck, from which, by extending the handle, it can be disengaged in a moment, a long, thick, and strongly plaited whip, called a *cart-whip*, the report of which is as loud, and the lash as severe, as those of the whips in common use with our waggoners, and which he has authority to apply at the instant when he perceives an occasion, without any previous warning. Thus disposed, their work begins, and continues without interruption, for a certain number of hours, during which, at the peril of the driver, an adequate portion of the land must be holed.

"As the trenches are generally rectilinear, and the whole line of holers advance together, it is necessary that every hole or section of the trench should be finished in equal time with the rest; and if any one or more Negroes were allowed to throw in the hoe with less rapidity or energy than their companions in other parts of the line, it is obvious that such

2. *They are still liable to severe punishments, inflicted in the most revolting and disgusting manner, at the mere will, uncontrolled by law, of the master, or of the overseer who acts for him.*— If we contemplate only the mode in which women continue to be punished on estates in Jamaica, we shall have another most impressive evidence of the depth of the slave's degradation. The British parliament have lately thought it right entirely to prohibit the flogging of women in this country, in any mode or for any crime, although that punishment could not have been inflicted without a regular trial, the finding of a British jury, and the sentence of a British judge. But in Jamaica, to this very day, every overseer retains the power, at his own entire discretion, for any offence, or for no offence, of exposing in the most shameless manner, in the presence of the whole gang, the person of every female, young or old, who is placed under his authority, and of inflicting on those very parts which it would be deemed in this country an intolerable outrage to expose at all, and which it is indecent even to name, thirty-nine lacerations of the tremendous cart-whip;

part of the trench as is passed over by the former will be more imperfectly formed than the rest: it is therefore the business of the drivers not only to urge forward the whole gang with sufficient speed, but to watch that all in the line, whether male or female, old or young, strong or feeble, work as nearly as possible in equal time and with equal effect; the tardy stroke must be quickened, and the languid invigorated; and the whole line made to dress, in the military phrase, as it advances; no breathing time, no resting on the hoe, no pause of languor to be repaid by brisker action or return to work, can be allowed to individuals: all must work or pause together.

“ I have taken this species of work as the strongest example, but other labours of the plantation are conducted upon the same principle, and as nearly as may be practicable, in the same manner.

“ In short, with a few exceptions, the compulsion of labour, by the physical impulse or present terror of the whip, is universal; and it would be as extraordinary in a West India island to see a line of Negroes without a driver behind them, as it would be in England to see a team of horses on a turnpike-road without a carman or waggoner.”

and the same power, though in a more limited extent, is possessed by every driver on every sugar estate in Jamaica. Let the women of Great Britain hear this, and let them unite their efforts in rescuing their miserable fellow-subjects; the Negro women of Jamaica, and our other colonies, from this horrid and cruel profanation.

Nor is it merely the power of corporal punishment which is possessed by the master or overseer, but that of adding to it the oppressive imprisonment of the stocks, and that for any length of time, accompanied by hard labour in the field. Here is a subject worthy of the attention of our committees of prison-discipline. Even in this land of freedom, with all our guards of law and magistracy, a free press, and enlightened public opinion, they have found ample room for their benevolent vigilance. Let them not stop there. Let them turn their attention to our slave-colonies. Let them look through the many thousands of places of confinement existing in the West Indies, subject to no legal controul, to no controul, indeed, but that of the owner or overseer of the estate, who is at once the accuser and the judge, the executioner of the sentence, and the jailer of his victim. Let them examine the stocks, and the bolts, and the fetters, and the chains, and the stripes which await his judgment or caprice, and say whether there be not here a new field worthy of their best exertions.

We have supposed, in what we have said under this head, that the overseer, in the punishments he inflicts, confines himself strictly within that measure of severity which the letter of the law permits him to exercise. But the peculiarity of colonial jurisprudence, to which we shall next advert, serves almost wholly to absolve him from any obligation to make the law the rule of his conduct in the administration of plantation-discipline, and renders almost every attempt to limit the exercise of his authority vain and illusory.

3. *In Jamaica and the other islands the evidence of slaves is still wholly inadmissible, not merely in cases implicating their owner, but in all cases whatsoever, whether civil or criminal, affecting persons of free condition.*

— Any White man may inflict not only thirty-nine but three hundred and ninety lashes on a slave; he may even murder the slave outright; yet, if the crime be not committed in the presence of other persons of free condition willing to testify against him, he is secure from punishment. A thousand other slaves may have been present, but not one of the thousand would be permitted to offer his testimony in a court of justice against the criminal. The jury would not even be allowed the opportunity of judging of the credibility of his evidence. The mere circumstance of his being a slave would be at once an insuperable bar to his statements being heard. His evidence would be wholly inadmissible. It is equally so in all civil causes, even when the suit involves a question of personal freedom.

It is unnecessary to point out the enormities which must result from such a system. About 345,000 inhabitants of Jamaica, for example, are thus shut out, by the operation of this universal principle of colonial law, from any fair hope of obtaining legal redress for any injury, whether civil or criminal, which they may sustain from any one of the privileged order, amounting, perhaps, to a fifteenth or twentieth part of the whole population; while the persons composing that order have this farther pledge of immunity, that it is their common interest to discourage and defeat any attempts, on the part of the the slaves, to obtain the efficient protection of magistrates or of courts of justice.

4. *The slaves in Jamaica and other colonies are still regarded by the law, and treated, in point of fact, not as human beings, but as chattels; and, as such, are liable to be seized and sold for the debts of their master, with as little*

ceremony as a horse or a cart, or a piece of furniture would be seized and sold in execution in this country. — Much has been said of the excessive cruelty of this practice even by West Indians. Bryan Edwards has eloquently exposed the many miseries which it produces to the slaves: he even brought a Bill into the British parliament about 1795, which passed into a law, for removing the impediments it was alleged our statute-book threw in the way of a remedy being applied to the evil by the humanity of the colonial legislatures. Nearly thirty years have since elapsed, and notwithstanding the removal of all impediments; notwithstanding the eloquent denunciations of Bryan Edwards; notwithstanding the undivided support he received from the whole West India body in parliament; not a single attempt has yet been made, in any one colony under the British crown, to remedy the evil. The nearest and dearest relations may still, by the ordinary process of law in civil suits, be torn asunder and separated for ever, dragged from their homes and their families, and sold even into a distant colony. — Great Britain has abolished the African Slave-trade. Even the West Indian planters, who strenuously fought its battles to the last, now join in reprobating its iniquity. But is there any thing in the African Slave-trade which can exceed in horror the practice in question, — a practice, too, specifically sanctioned by the colonial laws, — a practice not of rare and occasional, but of constant and almost daily, recurrence, and which takes place openly and publicly in the chief towns of our colonies? In our eagerness to induce other nations to abolish their Slave-trade, let us turn our eyes on the abominations of our own.

It seems unnecessary to point out how much the evil of this detestable principle of law must have been aggravated by the pecuniary difficulties under which the West India planters have been labouring, by their

own admission, for many years past; and how intensely its pressure on the wretched slaves must be augmented at this present moment by the acknowledged increase of those difficulties.

5. It is a farther proof of the hitherto unmitigated degradation of the African race in Jamaica and our other colonies, that, as we have already shown, *a black skin, or even the visible tinge of African blood in the countenance, furnishes a legal presumption of slavery, and exposes the unhappy individual, who cannot repel that presumption by legal evidence, to all the pains and penalties of a cruel and interminable bondage.* But on this point, after what we have said above (p. 88—97.), we need not now enlarge.

6. Besides this, *nothing has been done during the last thirty years to promote the gradual manumission of the slave-population, or to remove the obstructions which impeded it; but, on the contrary, those obstructions have in some instances been materially increased.*—While in the colonies of Spain and Portugal, and particularly of the former, the manumission of slaves has been liberally encouraged; in our own colonies, it has every where met with discouragement, and in some of them the infatuated policy of the local authorities has even imposed heavy fines on manumissions. The happy effects of the more liberal policy of Spain are visible even in Cuba, notwithstanding the immense importations of new Negroes which have taken place of late years into that island. But in all the other colonies of Spain, where these importations had ceased, it has issued at length in the almost entire extinction of Negro slavery, and that without any convulsion, nay, without loss to the master or injury to the slave. *

* We annex the substance of a statement on this subject, which has recently been laid before the public. It is to the following effect:—

Now, if it be not intended by the local legislatures that the state of slavery which now exists in the English colonies shall be perpetual, and that it shall be handed

In the Spanish American possessions it has always been the established practice to encourage manumissions. A slave had a right by law to his freedom, as soon as he could repay to his master the sum he had cost. In order to enable the slave to do this, he was not only allowed the undisturbed enjoyment of the Sabbath, either for rest or for religious purposes, or for his own emolument, as he might like best, but he was allowed also one day in the week for the cultivation of his provision-grounds; his master being entitled to the labour of the other five. As soon, however, as the slave, by his industry and frugality, had accumulated the fifth part of his value, it was usual for the master, on being paid that amount, to relinquish to the slave another day of the week, and so on until he had repaid the whole of his original cost, and thus became altogether free. He continued, however, in some cases, during the days which were his own, and even after his complete emancipation, to labour for hire in his master's service. By this process, not only was the master's capital replaced without loss, but a peasantry was formed around him, which had learned by experience the happy effects of industry and frugality, and were therefore industrious and provident. Notwithstanding this liberal policy, the enfranchised slaves have never been known in the Spanish possessions to rise against their former masters, or to excite those who were still slaves to seek any other method of deliverance than they themselves had pursued; whilst they formed, by their number and hardihood, a valuable means of defence from foreign aggression. In consequence of this admirable system, the whole Negro population of the Spanish possessions were so rapidly approximating to emancipation, that about the year 1790, the number of free Blacks and people of Colour somewhat exceeded, in all of them, the number of slaves. Since that time, in Cuba alone, in consequence of the immense importations from Africa into that island, has this proportion been diminished; but even there the free Black and Coloured population amounts to from a third to a half of the number of the slaves. In the other trans-Atlantic possessions of Spain their number has gone on progressively increasing, until now slavery can hardly be said to have an existence there. And this happy consummation has been effected without any commotion, and with the ready concurrence of the master, who has not only not been a loser, but a gainer, by the change. How opprobrious to Great Britain is the contrast which this system exhibits to that of our colonies!

The happy effects of this admirable mode of manumission are well illustrated in the following extract from Humboldt's Travels:

"We observed with a lively interest the great number of scattered houses in the valley inhabited by freedmen. In the Spanish colonies, the institutions and the manners are more favourable to the liberty of the

down as the inheritance of the Negro race from age to age, how happens it that not one step has yet been taken by them for relaxing the chains of so many thousands of our fellow-subjects? — Let it not be forgotten that in the year 1792 Mr. Dundas (afterwards Lord Melville), whose regard for West Indian interests no one has ever questioned, announced his intention of proposing a plan for extinguishing the bondage of our colonies. His

Blacks than in the other European settlements. In all these excursions we were agreeably surprised, not only at the progress of agriculture, but the increase of a free, laborious population accustomed to toil, and too poor to rely on the assistance of slaves. White and Black farmers had every where small separate establishments. Our host, whose father had a revenue of 40,000 piastres, possessing more lands than he could clear, he distributed them in the valley of Aragua among poor families who chose to apply themselves to the cultivation of cotton. He endeavoured to surround his ample plantations with freemen, who, working as they chose either on their own land or in the neighbouring plantations, supplied him with day-labourers at the time of harvest. Nobly occupied on the means best adapted gradually to extinguish the slavery of the Blacks in these colonies, Count Torur flattered himself with the double hope of rendering slaves less necessary to the landholders, and furnishing the freedmen with opportunities of becoming farmers. On departing for Europe he had parcelled out, and let a part of the lands of Cura. Four years after, at his return to America, he found on this spot, finely cultivated in cotton, a little hamlet of thirty or forty houses, which is called Punta Zamuro, and which we afterwards visited with him. The inhabitants of this hamlet are nearly all Mulattoes, Zumboes, or free Blacks. This example of letting out land has been happily followed by other great proprietors. The rent is ten piastres for a vanega of ground, and is paid in money or in cotton. As the small farmers are often in want, they sell their cotton at a very moderate price. They sell it even before the harvest; and the advances thus made by rich neighbours, place the debtor in a state of dependence, which frequently obliges him to offer his services as a labourer. The price of labour is cheaper here than in France. A freeman working as a day-labourer (Peor) is paid in the valleys of Aragua and in the Llanos four or five piastres a month, not including food, which is very cheap on account of the abundance of meat and vegetables. I love to dwell on these details of colonial industry, because they prove to the inhabitants of Europe, what to the enlightened inhabitants of the colonies has long ceased to be doubtful, that the continent of Spanish America can produce sugar and indigo by free hands, and that the unhappy slaves are capable of becoming peasants, farmers, and landholders."

plan was simply this, that all children who should be born in the West Indies after a fixed day (the 31st Dec. 1799, we believe,) should be free, and, being free, should be educated by the masters of the parents, and, when arrived at such a degree of strength as should qualify them for labour, should work for five or for ten years, or whatever period it might be, for the payment of the expence of their previous education and maintenance. Thirty-one years have since passed, and we seem farther removed from such a consummation at the present moment than we were at that period. Matters, on the contrary, have been getting worse: the local authorities have not only adopted no active measures to promote manumissions, but they have added to the impediments which before existed: they have been so far from empowering slaves, as in the Spanish colonies, to demand their freedom, when by their industry and frugality they have acquired the means of purchasing it, that they have even discouraged, in various ways, voluntary manumissions of meritorious slaves by their masters.

In May, 1801, an act was passed in Barbadoes to increase the fines on manumissions from 50*l.* to 300*l.* on each female manumitted, and to 200*l.* on each male. In July, 1802, the legislature of St. Kitts imposed a fine of 500*l.* currency on the manumission of slaves born in the island, to be increased to 1000*l.* in the case of slaves not born in the island. In some of the other islands fines of inferior amount were imposed; and in the Bermudas an act was passed to prohibit emancipation altogether, and to prevent persons of Colour being seised of real estate: — and all these acts received the royal assent! Such has been the spirit of colonial legislature even at a recent period!

7. But let us further look at the moral condition of our slave-colonies, and we shall be better able to judge

of the real progress of improvement as contrasted with the boasts to which we have alluded.

(The marriage of slaves has not yet been legalised in Jamaica or in any one of our slave-colonies. The most unrestrained licentiousness prevails, almost universally, on estates, among all classes whether White or Black. The face of society presents, with few exceptions, one unvarying scene of open and promiscuous concubinage and prostitution. The Christian Sabbath, instead of being a day of rest and religious observance, continues to be the universally authorized market-day, and in almost all the colonies, and especially in Jamaica, a day of compulsory labour for the slaves); — we say *compulsory labour*, for though they may not be actually driven, in their provision-grounds, on the Sunday, yet they are compelled to cultivate them on that day on pain of starving; — they toil under the lash for six days in the week, and during the time of crop for six days and three nights, making nine days labour in the week for a great part of the year; and yet they are denied the rest of the Sabbath: — they must toil on that day also, or starve.

And while in our colonies the Negro slaves are denied the Sabbath as a day of repose or devotion, in the colonies of Spain and Portugal the conduct pursued is widely different. There, the Sabbath is appropriated in the case of the slaves to rest or religious observances, and another day in the week is regularly allowed them to cultivate their grounds, or otherwise to be employed for their own benefit. The contrast is striking and opprobrious !

When we take this circumstance into view, and when we connect with it the fact of the non-institution of marriage, and the open and avowed profligacy of manners which prevails in Jamaica, for example; and when we take into the account, moreover, the driving system, and the arbitrary power of punishment placed in the

hands of the Whites, can we wonder that the Negro population should be decreasing in most of our colonies, and especially in those where sugar is extensively cultivated? * If the human race could increase under such circumstances, it would be contrary to all our received notions of the tendency of the moral government of God. A blight must accompany a system so directly at variance with his known will. His displeasure must rest upon it.

To look also for the effectual communication of religious instruction to the slaves by their masters, under such a system, must be considered as hopeless. We have seen, indeed, striking effects produced by the labours of Missionaries, among the slaves, in several of our islands; but the attempts of these Missionaries have this advantage over any attempts which the masters themselves might make, that they are not rendered abortive, in the very outset, by the glaring inconsistency, which even the slaves themselves must be struck with, of having Christianity offered them by men whose system of proceeding is a flagrant outrage of its most sacred obligations.

Before the planters can hope to succeed in any efforts they may make to convey religious instruction to their slaves, they must, at least, begin by giving them the Sabbath.

We purposely omit many other circumstances in the legal condition of the Negro slave, which tend to aggravate the hardship of his condition, from a fear of too much swelling the present pamphlet. We allude to such circumstances as these. He is debarred the common right of self-defence, if the person assaulting him be a White: death, or some other severe

* See *supra*; p. 39. note.

punishment, is denounced against him for striking, or attempting to strike, struggling with, resisting, or opposing any White person. He is subject not only to the general criminal law, but to a peculiar penal code of extreme harshness and severity: for example, he is liable to suffer death for obeah, or witchcraft; he is liable to death, or dismemberment, for running away; he is liable to thirty-nine lashes for drumming, dancing, drinking, using insolent language or gestures, &c. We will not, however, dwell on this part of the case at present, enough having been brought forward to establish our general position respecting the still unmitigated severity of colonial bondage.

Now, after this view of the subject, when we read again the motions of Mr. Charles Ellis, in 1797, and of Mr. Palmer, in 1816, (both planters of eminence in Jamaica,) calling upon His Majesty, in grave and set terms, to take measures for promoting "the moral and religious improvement, as well as the comfort and happiness of the Negroes," in what light are we compelled to regard such motions? We should be glad, at least, to learn how many of the West Indian gentlemen who supported those motions, have done what in them lay to promote "the moral and religious improvement, as well as the comfort and happiness of their slaves;"—how many of them have secured to their own slaves (for this, at least, was in their power) the undisturbed enjoyment of the Sabbath as a day of rest, by giving them the same time, on other days, for the culture of their grounds;—how many of them, also, have made Sunday, on their own estates, a day of religious worship and instruction. We should further be glad to learn, what efforts they have made to prevent the profanation of that day by public markets and forced labour;—what measures they have adopted for repressing, on their

own estates, the shameful irregularities which have been shewn so universally to prevail ; — what substitute they have found for the *driving* system ; — and what effective restraints they have imposed, in their own cases, on the tremendous power possessed by overseers ? Let them shew what they themselves have done in these respects, before they can hope to derive any credit from the barren generalities of a parliamentary address ; which, whatever may have been its real purpose, has produced no beneficial results to the Negro population.

We admit that the legislature of Jamaica has passed an act appointing curates for the instruction of the slaves, and giving these curates salaries ; but still the slaves have no Sabbath. We also admit that many of the slaves have been christened ; but still they have no Sabbath. The very men who vaunt that curate's act and those christenings, as a proof of their zeal for Christianity, still deny to their slaves the Christian Sabbath. This fact speaks for itself.

We shall abstain from any farther observations on the present occasion, although the subject is very far indeed from being exhausted. But we are anxious, before we conclude, to take this opportunity of calling upon influential West Indians in this country, and especially upon such of them as sit in either House of Parliament, to consider dispassionately the facts we have brought before them, and to ask themselves whether they have done their duty in permitting a state of things, so repugnant to every principle of humanity and justice, to continue so long unmitigated and unredressed. It is surely worthy of such men as Lord Darlington, Lord Harewood, and Lord Holland, not to mention the numerous West India planters and merchants in the lower House of Parliament, to come forward to investigate and reform the abuses of a system which their high

names have served, in some measure, to rescue from merited reprobation. To the last-mentioned nobleman, in particular, we would make our appeal, in the confidence that it will not be made in vain. He stands pledged to the African race, not merely by the hereditary obligations which are attached to the revered name of Fox, — not merely by the engagements which he early entered into, and has often renewed in the face of the country, — not merely by the liberal principles which he professes on all occasions to be the guides of his public conduct ; — but, above all, by the circumstance that he is himself a planter, and derives a part of his revenue from the cruel and debasing bondage which we have here attempted to delineate. It seems, therefore, peculiarly incumbent on him to take a leading part in instituting an enquiry into its nature and effects, and in applying, without delay, a remedy to its evils.

We would also remind those distinguished friends of justice and humanity in both Houses of Parliament, (our Gloucesters, Grenvilles, Greys, Lansdownes, and Harrowbys ; our Wilberforces, Smiths, Cannings, Broughams, and Mackintoshes,) who have toiled so ardently in the cause of the wretched African, that a great duty devolves upon them, and that to them will the public, when their eyes are fully opened to the enormity of the system which prevails in our slave-colonies, naturally look for the zealous and consistent prosecution of the principles which animated them in their struggles to suppress the Slave-trade.

But let the public also do their duty. Let them strengthen the hands of their leaders by a general, distinct, and concurrent appeal to the legislature on this momentous subject. If, through their supineness in making their wishes known, the dreadful evils of colonial bondage should be indefinitely prolonged, will not the guilt become theirs ? They cannot plead ignorance

of the existence of these evils. Proof has been produced, sufficient to satisfy every reasonable man, that at least a parliamentary investigation is indispensable. Let them then unite in calling for such an investigation, and for such remedial measures as that investigation may shew to be requisite. And let them remember, to stimulate their efforts, that at present, they (the British public) do not only tolerate this system, but they actually support it. It could not exist for a single year, but for the aid of the public purse; which, to the extent of two or three millions, is, at this moment, annually expended in bolstering up this fabric of iniquity. But it cannot last. Such a combination of impiety and licentiousness, of oppression and cruelty, of war with all human sympathies, and contempt for all divine laws, cannot continue to meet with countenance and support in this country. It only requires to be known and appreciated, in order to be effectually reformed. If we could for a moment anticipate a contrary result, we should tremble for our country. If, after these practices are known, we should connive at their continuance, nay, if we do not do our best to suppress them, we shall be justly chargeable, in the sight of the Almighty, with all their turpitude and criminality.

But what, it may be asked, are the practical measures it is proposed to adopt? On these we may think it necessary hereafter to address the public. In the mean time our object is simply to expose the enormity of the evils of Negro slavery, with a view to excite the attention of the public, and, through them, of Parliament to the subject. On the wisdom and justice of Parliament we place an implicit reliance. Let the evils be only examined and ascertained, and we cannot doubt that appropriate remedies will be discovered and applied. Neither can we doubt that in applying them a due regard will be paid to whatever claims West

Indian planters may have on the liberality of the nation.

The present publication, it seems right to mention, has originated with an association at Liverpool, formed for the express purpose of employing all lawful and prudent means for mitigating and finally abolishing the state of slavery throughout the British dominions. Similar associations are already formed in the metropolis and in other parts of the United Kingdom. But it became Liverpool, long the deepest in the guilt of the Slave-trade, to come forward the first to protest against the perpetuation of the original injustice of that criminal traffic, in the persons of the descendants of its earlier victims. Such associations, we trust, will be multiplied in every corner of the realm, and will never intermit their united and strenuous efforts, until by exposition, petition, remonstrance, and every legal method of intervention, they wipe out this foul stain from the character of their country, and deliver themselves from all participation in a system which, as has now been demonstrated, involves the violation of every acknowledged principle of the religion of Christ.

THE END.

A List of WORKS, containing important Information on the Subject of Slavery.

Ramsay's Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies. London. Phillips, George Yard. 1784.

Privy Council Report on the Slave Trade and Slavery, 1788—1789.

House of Commons Evidence on ditto, 1790—1791.

Abstract of ditto, and of Privy Council Report.

Debates in House of Commons, 1791. } Printed for Phillips.
Ditto ditto, 1792. }

Ditto ditto, 1806. }
Ditto ditto, 1807. } Printed for Hatchard.
Ditto on Slavery at the Cape of }
Good Hope, - - }

Wilberforce's Letter to his Constituents, 1807.

Pinckard's Notes on the West Indies.

Professional Planter.

Dixon's Mitigation of Slavery.

Watson's Defence of the Methodist Missions in the West Indies.

Report of the African Institution on Reasons for a Registry of Slaves.

Review of the Colonial Registry Bills by the African Institution.

Sixteenth Annual Report of the African Institution.

Stephens's Letters to Wilberforce on the Registry of Slaves.

Cropper's Letters to Wilberforce.

Singleton's Report of the State of Sierra Leone.

Pamphleteer, No. XVI. containing Coster on the Amelioration of Slavery.

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